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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report updates the Economic and Social Council on actions undertaken by the regional commissions during the period under review with respect to the guidance given in annex III to Council resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998 on their contributions and relevance to the reform process of the United Nations. In addition, in response to Council decision 2003/205 of 28 January 2003, the report explores, in section III, the theme for the regional cooperation item at the Council's substantive session of 2003, which is "Development dimensions of trade negotiations: a regional perspective". The report also provides, in section IV, the report of the Executive Secretaries, which is submitted to the Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV).

The resolutions and decisions adopted by the regional commissions during the spring of 2003 that require action by the Council or are brought to its attention are contained in addendum 1 (E/2003/15/Add.1).

The summaries of the economic surveys of the five regions are provided to the Council for its consideration (see E/2003/16-20). The annual reports of the regional commissions are made available as background information as they address issues relevant to the matters that are the concern of the present report and its addendum. They are issued as supplements to the *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*.

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Introduction

1. In its resolution 1998/46, the Economic and Social Council recognized the dual role of the regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations and as its regional expression. In the same resolution, the Council provided guidance to the regional commissions with respect to their contributions and relevance to the reform process of the United Nations. Since the adoption of this resolution in 1998, the regional commissions have been reporting yearly to the Council on the measures taken in response to the guidance it provided. In addition to providing information on such measures, which member delegations of the Council have welcomed, the present report explores interregional cooperation in the context of the efforts of the regional commissions to build bridges towards understanding development requirements and for promoting regional and international cooperation. The report of the Executive Secretaries, which is contained in section IV, reflects their views on many of the issues addressed in the report.

I. The regional commissions as the regional expression of the United Nations

A. Significant substantive issues before the commissions' sessions in 2003 or with which the commissions have been seized during the period under review

2. During the period under review, the regional commissions dealt with a wide spectrum of issues in the economic, social and political spheres. They ranged from regional development and regional integration in the context of the global economy, sustainable development, combating poverty and HIV/AIDS to the impact of conflicts on the economic and social development of the regions.

Economic Commission for Europe

3. The high-level policy segment of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was devoted to discussions concerning both economic development and sustainable development in the ECE region. The annual session also featured a Gunnar Myrdal lecture, with the 1993 Nobel Prize laureate Douglas C. North giving a lecture on "The role of institutions in economic development".

4. On the basis of the *Economic Survey of Europe 2003 No.1*, it was noted in the debate that the outcomes for the world economy for 2002 were generally disappointing as the global recovery had lost momentum in the course of the year. World output growth continued to be strongly dependent on economic developments in the United States, but that country's recovery only provided a limited impetus to global economic activity, as its private household spending could not fully offset the negative impact of low business investment activity.

5. An upturn in Western Europe failed to materialize and economic growth in the region remained subdued, with economic growth actually decelerating substantially in the euro area. Unlike the situation in the United States, where strong support from economic policy prevented a further weakening of output growth, macroeconomic

policy in the euro area was not adequately responsive to the pronounced cyclical downturn and provided little support to economic activity.

6. By contrast, the Eastern European and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) economies demonstrated surprising resilience to the global slowdown and in 2002, these economies grew by 4.8 per cent and 4.1 per cent, respectively. For 2003, ECE projects a 4.2 per cent expansion for these economies, but only 1.6 per cent growth in the European Union and 2.5 per cent in the United States. The main factors that contributed to the high pace of output growth in the Eastern European and CIS economies were the strong growth of their domestic demand and, in several cases, their unexpectedly good export performance. The short-term economic outlook in the ECE region remains subject to major downside risks. Among the acute risk factors are the heightened geopolitical risks related to the conflict in Iraq and its possible negative global economic repercussions. The persistence of structural imbalances in the global economy (such as the large current account deficit and the high levels of private sector debt in the United States) is also likely to continue to restrain world economic growth. Eastern Europe and the CIS in general should preserve their growth momentum in 2003, but the risks for the successful continuation of their recovery are also on the rise. Given the considerable uncertainties and risks in the global economy, achieving a sustained upswing in the major Western European economies is important for restoring the balance of economic growth in the whole ECE region.

7. While in the longer run invigorating growth in Western Europe hinges on the implementation of major structural reforms, in the short run it is macroeconomic policy, particularly in the euro area, that should provide a stronger impetus to economic activity. Thus, with respect to monetary policy, there is scope for a further reduction in interest rates (also to offset the sizeable appreciation of the euro), while fiscal policy should concentrate on the needed reforms of the Stability and Growth Pact to allow for a greater flexibility and a greater counter-cyclical responsiveness in difficult times.

8. Member States emphasized that ECE had already done important work in the area of sustainable development even before the World Summit on Social Development, and its expertise would be fully utilized when reviewing and monitoring national sustainable development plans, and when pursuing with other regional organizations coordinated approaches such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Great Lakes and Baltic Sea Partnership initiatives. Member States also stressed that ECE should play an active role in supporting the implementation of sustainable development strategies; in creating new partnerships; and in ensuring a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into all sectors of activities, including the development of indicators for sustainable development.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

9. In view of the inauspicious regional situation resulting from the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), it was decided that the fifty-ninth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) would be held in two phases. The first phase of the Commission session was held on 24 and 25 April 2003, to deal mainly with programming and management issues, as well as transit transport issues in landlocked and transit developing countries. All

other substantive issues intended for discussion at the Commission session, including its theme topic of HIV/AIDS, would be dealt with in the second phase, the dates for which were still to be decided, and would be included in the report to be submitted to the ECOSOC at its resumed session.

10. The Commission noted that, in an era of globalization, economic growth and development were closely linked to the provision of adequate and efficient transport infrastructure and services. In that respect, it also noted that landlocked and transit countries in the Asian and Pacific region were particularly constrained by a range of difficulties consisting of geographic disadvantages, high transport costs, less developed infrastructure facilities and inadequate management information. The Commission further noted that emerging opportunities for intraregional trade were stimulating the demand for landlocked countries to serve as "land-linking" countries by providing transit services to their neighbours.

11. The Commission recognized that, for transit transport issues to be addressed effectively, a comprehensive approach was required involving relevant government ministries, agencies and the private sector. It considered that there was a need to establish mutually beneficial partnerships between landlocked countries, transit developing countries and the international community that included collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, such as donors and the private sector. The Commission proposed that landlocked and transit developing countries should, with the assistance of donor countries and international organizations, enhance their bilateral and multilateral cooperation and promote economic and trade development within the region by formulating model framework agreements that could be utilized by countries to facilitate and increase the efficiency of transit transport.

12. The Commission expressed its support for the proposed framework of recommendations and action plan as a practical structure for strengthening transit transport systems. The Regional Platform was endorsed for submission to the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 28 and 29 August 2003.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

13. In preparation for the Third Regional Conference in Follow-Up to the World Summit for Social Development and in the light of the United Nations Millennium Declaration commitments, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is focusing its work on the theme of poverty eradication in the region and grappling with the concept and measurement of poverty and its determinants, as well as proposing strategies that can lead to poverty eradication.

14. The relevance of poverty in Latin America and the need to address this problem become evident when analysing regional data: in 2000 one out of five Latin Americans lived in extreme poverty (88 million people) and almost half of the inhabitants of the region lived in poverty (207 million). Extreme poverty and poverty, whose levels vary widely among countries in the region, were reduced during the 1990s, but at the end of the decade the pace of reduction slowed and some of the gains were even reversed.

15. Since poverty is a complex phenomenon with multiple dimensions and causes, it is very difficult to obtain a complete picture from a single poverty indicator, such as the income poverty headcount. Furthermore, ECLAC recognizes that the aggregation of different indicators into a composite index may not be directly useful for the design of poverty eradication policies. The determinants of poverty are also multifaceted, as they are linked to demographic dynamics, macroeconomic factors and employment conditions, as well as to gender and ethnicity. Demographic dynamics present a close link with poverty trends. Without improvements in the income levels of the poor, a demographic push will inevitably bring an increase in poverty rates. Macroeconomic crises, on the other hand, disproportionately affect poor people, who are more vulnerable than others to the consequences of external, fiscal and financial crises. Moreover, during the 1990s, in Latin America macroeconomic policies directed towards macroeconomic stability and the integration in the world economy failed to consider explicitly the effects on real variables such as growth, employment and investment, with negative consequences for the poor. One of the most harmful consequences of crises has been the significant growth of unemployment rates among the poor, which not only raises the incidence of poverty, but also worsens poverty gaps. Besides lack of income and education, unemployment becomes another factor affecting poor households.

16. Women and indigenous people are among the poorest in Latin America. Women's contribution to total household income in the region averages around 32 per cent. The average increase in the relative contribution of women during the 1990s, however, was 4.9 percentage points, reflecting some progress towards gender equality. Indigenous people, Afro-Latin and Afro-Caribbean populations are among the poorest in the region because of a combination of factors, such as progressive loss of control over land, the breakdown of communal economies, low levels of education, unemployment, and difficulties in accessing services.

17. In order to eradicate poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC has proposed a strategy based on two pillars: the generation of opportunities and the development of capacities. The first pillar relates to the need to attain a sustainable rate of economic growth resulting in the creation of labour-intensive employment and in the strengthening of the material assets of the poor. The second pillar recognizes that human capital is developed through investment in health and education, and that it is a prerequisite that individuals participate productively in the labour market for countries to attain development. Social capital is also an essential component of the second pillar as it is particularly important to promote poor people's participation at the community, local and national levels.

18. This strategy is built on the belief that one of the main objectives of social development policies must be improvement of the standard of living, particularly that of the poorest people. Thus, public interventions should be oriented towards guaranteeing at least a minimum level of income and quality of life and, complementarily, minimizing inequities between the middle or upper classes and the poor.

Economic Commission for Africa

19. In 2003, for the first time, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank synchronized their annual legislative meetings to allow senior policy makers to agree on strategies in time for crucial negotiations at the

annual meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions and to discuss and chart new policy initiatives. The Annual Meeting of the African Development Bank and the Annual Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of ECA were held back-to-back and were preceded by a meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa Committee of Experts. As part of the new arrangement, the two institutions sponsored the Annual Meetings Symposium; its theme was "Poverty reduction, social development and the Millennium Development Goals in Africa: are we making progress on the ground?"

20. The thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Africa was convened under the theme "Towards greater coherence and mutual accountability for development effectiveness". This theme was conceived to provide an opportunity for senior African policy makers to contribute to the ongoing discussions at the global level on issues of policy coherence and harmonization towards enhancing the effectiveness of development assistance.

21. A significant feature of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is its focus on transforming Africa's relationship with its development partners as a means of achieving coherence and effectiveness in development assistance. Discussions at the thirty-fifth session of ECA, in October 2002, focused on the key determinants of aid effectiveness, with emphasis on actions to be taken by African countries and their development partners in operationalizing NEPAD and ensuring that the principles and objectives of the initiative are translated to country-level programmes and projects. The Ministers recommended greater harmonization of aid policies to reduce transaction costs; simplification of aid practices; and, where conditions allow, the channelling of aid through the national budgets of recipient countries.

22. Several important developments and events since the thirty-fifth session of the Commission have re-emphasized the need for more dialogue on the issue of policy coherence and mutual accountability. They include the discussions at the annual ECA "Big table" event, which was convened in January 2003 to examine practical modalities and arrangements for operationalizing the principle of mutual accountability. Other issues discussed at the thirty-sixth session included issues of market access, agricultural subsidies of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, debt relief for the heavily indebted low-income countries and commodity prices. The discussion on these issues drew on the extensive technical work jointly undertaken by ECA and OECD in the context of the review of the impact of aid policies and practices for Africa's development prospects. In view of the role assigned to ECA in the work of the newly established Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa, links between HIV/AIDS and governance in various sectors, including agriculture, youth and the military were also examined by the Conference. In addition, the Conference reflected on the possible implications for the continent's growth prospects of the recent self-assessment exercise embarked on by the IMF.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

23. The deliberations at the twenty-second session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) started with a public round table on the "Impact of the lack of stability in the Western Asia region on economic and social development". The round table gathered together heads of delegations and

prominent Lebanese political leaders and thinkers, who emphasized, in particular, the importance of enhancing the role of the United Nations and the League of Arab States in this regard. They also stressed the necessity for international legitimacy in order to achieve interaction with civil society and enable it to contribute to decision-making. Participants agreed that lack of stability was the greatest obstacle to development. They underscored the necessity of activating the links between decision makers and all social actors, including non-governmental organizations.

24. According to ESCWA estimates, war in the past decade may be held directly responsible for losses amounting to some US$ 600 billion from the gross domestic product of the countries of the region. It is expected that, as a result of the war against Iraq, those losses will increase to $1,000 billion. In terms of lost employment opportunities, those losses represent between four and five million job opportunities, a figure that is expected to rise to between six and seven million as a result of the war against Iraq.

25. In its recent reform and restructuring exercise, ESCWA reconsidered its orientations and programme of work so as to provide a better response to the needs of its member countries which at the last session of the Commission decided that the work of ESCWA should focus on regional integration, and more specifically on the four high priority areas of water, globalization, social policies and technology.

26. Concerning regional integration, ESCWA started developing an integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq that has had quick results: the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq was adopted at the twenty-first session in 2001; the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq was adopted at the twenty-second session; and at the twenty-third session, an agreement on maritime routes will be adopted, in a further effort to achieve regional integration and cooperation.

27. At the twenty-second session the ESCWA work programme, which focused on Arab regional integration and on the four priority areas cited above, was reviewed and note was taken of the work undertaken in preparation for the World Summit for Sustainable Development and the World Trade Organization Doha Development Round, as well as the World Summit on the Information Society to be convened in Geneva in December 2003.

28. With respect to activities relating to Palestine, ESCWA continues to prepare an annual report on the "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan". At the session also, strengthening Arab regional cooperation, the role of ESCWA in coordinating regional activities of the United Nations and the designation of the commission's sessions as pledging conferences were also discussed.

29. The session concluded with the adoption of a number of resolutions, in which the Commission recommended: the holding of an Arab international forum on the economic and social rehabilitation and reconstruction of Palestine; the establishment of a committee on women at ESCWA; the establishment of a United Nations Arab language centre at ESCWA; and the formulation of a regional plan of action for an information society.

B. Regional preparations and follow-up to world conferences and other global meetings

30. The regional commissions have been given specific mandates for the follow-up to the major global conferences. In that regard, the Council also invited the regional commissions to further strengthen their active participation relating to the implementation at the regional level of the results of major United Nations conferences and summits. The present section provides a brief analysis of the role being played by the regional commissions in respect of the most recent of the global conferences and summits, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as of regional preparation for the three upcoming conferences, the international meeting on small island developing States, the World Summit on the Information Society and the international ministerial conference on transit transport cooperation.[1]

1. Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

Economic Commission for Europe

31. The work of ECE in follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development has focused on analytical work; promoting policy dialogue, including the sharing of best practices; the development of norms, standards, agreements and conventions in the trade and transport sectors, as well as the monitoring of their implementation; and on questions related to financing. The analysis contained in the *Economic Survey of Europe 2003, No. 1*, continued to address the macroeconomic developments, trade, capital flows — including foreign direct investment (FDI) — and the external debt situation in Eastern Europe and the CIS countries. The *Survey* included a study on "The transition economies" which addressed, inter alia, the foreign indebtedness of Eastern Europe and the CIS countries and their access to the global financial markets, as well as the coherency and consistency of macroeconomic policies in the light of rising fiscal deficits in several Eastern European and CIS countries. The importance of reforms in economic development was addressed in "Progress in systemic reforms in the CIS" and that of good corporate governance in "Corporate governance in the ECE region".

32. The exchange of best practices was facilitated by ECE through the organization of a number of relevant events, including an expert meeting on "How to become a supplier of large enterprises and transnational corporations" and seminars on "How to build dynamic and successful public-private partnership units" and on "Trade, business and investment in a wider Europe" to examine the consequences of European Union (EU) enlargement for the region. Also, in support of greater transparency in trade regulations and procedures and to reduce non-tariff barriers that hamper international trade, the ECE Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policy adopted a new Recommendation "L" for an "International model for technical harmonization based on good regulatory practice". It also launched at the same meeting a pilot project for implementation of this recommendation in the telecommunications sector. In regard to financing, the ECE Working Party on Transport Trend and Economics will, in September 2003, consider the issue of financing schemes for transport infrastructure. ECE has also recently completed a report on "Cost benefit analysis of transport infrastructure projects".

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

33. The Asian and Pacific region is diverse in character, and different countries give different emphases to the different dimensions of financing for development. For least developed countries, island countries and countries with economies in transition, the key challenge is to mobilize concessional and domestic resources for development. For other countries, there is concern about falling FDI levels and the need to expand access to private sources of funding, both through traditional banking channels and by participation in financial markets.

34. Among other issues, the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2003* examines the problem of the insufficiency of public resources to expand education and health to satisfy the needs of all citizens and highlights the need to augment their provision from the private sector. To address the issue of bank finance, the ESCAP secretariat organized in October 2002, jointly with the Asian Development Bank, a seminar on "Rejuvenating bank finance for development in Asia and the Pacific". The economic crisis that affected several countries in the region in 1997 had its severest impact on the banking systems of those countries, leading to the phenomenon of the "credit crunch". Rejuvenating banking is thus an urgent need if countries in the region are to regain their pre-crisis momentum of growth.

35. A substantial portion of external resources are in the form of debt, whose optimal management raises major policy issues. ESCAP plans to hold in late 2003 a regional workshop on sustainable debt management and on innovative sources of finance in the region. The workshop is expected to strengthen national capacity to formulate and implement effective policies in the management of external debt, with the specific aim of minimizing the burden of debt services and of providing additional sources of development finance for countries in the region.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

36. ECLAC has been contributing to the efforts of countries of Latin America and the Caribbean towards achieving progress in the "leading actions" identified in the Monterrey Consensus. In the area of mobilizing domestic financial resources for development, ECLAC has continued working on several projects concerned with enabling the domestic economic environment for growth and development in the region. In cooperation with the Government of the Netherlands, ECLAC has been implementing a project entitled "Financial policies to increase savings and promote social equity", aimed at providing policy recommendations to its member States to strengthen the savings capacity of households, particularly lower income ones. Case studies were carried out in Bolivia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Uruguay, following which a seminar on "Popular saving in Europe: lessons for Latin America" was organized (La Paz, Bolivia, 3-4 June 2002). Under the project another report, entitled "Housing finance and access to housing for lower income households in Latin America", was published in September 2002 as part of the ECLAC Financing for Development Series. Also, the Fifteenth Regional Seminar on Fiscal Policy (Santiago, Chile, 27-30 January 2003), organized in cooperation with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Government of Chile, dealt with two issues of financing for development: fiscal policy in highly indebted poor countries and strengthening the international financial architecture.

37. With the sponsorship of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), ECLAC has been executing a project entitled "Institutional requirements for market-led development in Latin America". In addition, as part of a joint Korea Institute for International Economic Policy/ECLAC project, a report entitled "Multilateral banking and development financing in a context of financial volatility" was published in June 2002. ECLAC is about to begin implementing, with the sponsorship of GTZ, another project entitled "Strengthening the role of regional and national financial institutions for sustainable social development".

38. In the areas of mobilizing international resources for development: foreign direct investment and other private flows, and external debt, in April 2003, ECLAC launched its *Foreign Investment in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2002 Report*. This publication provides a broad review of FDI trends in Latin America and the Caribbean, offers a comprehensive discussion of investment flows to the Andean Community countries and analyses flows from transnational banks to the banking sector in the region.

39. Regarding the area of addressing systemic issues, as part of a joint United Nations University/World Institute for Development Economics Research/ECLAC project on capital flows to emerging markets since the Asian crisis, two reports were published in March 2003, entitled "Financial regulations and supervision in emerging markets: the experience of Latin America since the tequila crisis" and "Financial crisis and national policy issues: an overview". In addition, ECLAC organized an international seminar on "Management of volatility, financial globalization and growth in emerging economies" (Santiago, Chile, 24 April 2003).

Economic Commission for Africa

40. ECA has been supporting African countries through a variety of activities aimed at ensuring the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems. Thus, ECA support has been focused on measures to enhance domestic resource mobilization, official development assistance (ODA), international trade flows and debt relief as critical elements for achieving coherence in financing for development.

41. ECA has been supporting African countries to formulate and implement sound economic and financial policies for the development of efficient banking and financial systems through the provision of technical and advisory services to member States. Several meetings and workshops/expert group meetings and conferences focusing on the design and implementation of appropriate policies for domestic and external resource mobilization were held in 2002. In addition, a capital markets development project was launched in 2003 to address the problem of weak capital markets in Africa at the regional and national levels and thereby strengthen the capacity for domestic resource mobilization. The project will also provide capacity building support to member States in adopting policies and establishing the necessary framework to support the development of capital markets in Africa.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

42. With respect to the area of external debt, ESCWA participated in the third meeting of the Debt Management and Financial System (DMFAS) Advisory Group of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held in Geneva on 12 September 2002. The issues addressed included debt-management

capacity-building and reviewed experiences of countries in managing their respective external debts. In addition, a study was initiated by ESCWA in early 2003 on external debt management in the region, with case studies on Jordan and Lebanon.

43. ESCWA and UNCTAD are cooperating to implement a project on "Networking of expertise on foreign direct investment in the ESCWA region" and have also jointly held a training workshop entitled "Methodological standards for compilation of statistics on foreign direct investment and the activities of transnational corporations". ESCWA participated in an expert group meeting on experiences with bilateral and regional approaches to multilateral cooperation in long-term cross-border investment, particularly foreign direct investment, held in Geneva from 12 to 14 June 2002. ESCWA is currently preparing a study on attracting FDI and improving investment climate and mobilization of domestic savings, with special case studies on Bahrain, Jordan and Yemen, the region's least developed country.

2. Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Economic Commission for Europe

44. In follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, ECE reviewed, at its fifty-eighth session, the national strategies for sustainable development of its member States, as well as the lessons learned. The following key points emerged from the discussions:

(a) Successful implementation of national strategies needs high-level political commitment and an appropriate institutional and legislative framework, dialogue involving all stakeholders and broad partnerships.

(b) The national sustainable development plan should be a living document, with reviews and monitoring mechanisms put in place. Its development and implementation should be a continual learning process. Progress in implementation should be measured with concrete indicators, clearly identified targets and a fixed timetable. Peer reviews could be particularly helpful in this context.

(c) Among the priorities or areas commonly addressed by countries are the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation; changing production and consumption patterns; fighting poverty and ensuring social cohesion; health; sound management of natural resources; sustainable energy policy; environmental protection, research, technology and innovations; land use, urban planning and development; and environment-friendly mobility.

45. With a view to implementing the decisions of the World Summit and mainstreaming them in ECE work, a Senior Management Group for Sustainable Development, chaired by the Executive Secretary, has been established and will convene regular meetings in order to ensure a consistent pattern of activities in the Commission. The group is also responsible for preparing ECE secretariat inputs to the Commission on Sustainable Development, cooperation with regional partners, as well as the other regional commissions, and supporting other relevant work, such as the contribution of the Economic Survey to enhancing sustainable development.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

46. Recognizing that public-private partnerships would offer a flexible solution to government budgetary constraints in the delivery of basic services, ESCAP is implementing a major project entitled "Providing basic services to the poor through public-private partnership: ESCAP follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development". The project aims to demonstrate best practices and to strengthen institutional capacities for developing and facilitating pro-poor public-private partnerships in the region.

47. Emphasis has also been put on capacity-building for strategic planning and management for sustainable development, as well as action plans in the environment, energy and water sectors. A study has been carried out in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the aim of providing useful guidelines to decision makers regarding the formulation and implementation of improved policies towards sustainable development. Based on the study, training programmes are being planned to enhance the institutional capacities of countries for environmental governance. Training programmes also continue to be under way to assist developing countries in negotiating and implementing multilateral environmental agreements.

48. In the energy sector, ESCAP continues to provide assistance in capacity-building in three main areas: energy planning, energy efficiency and renewable energy for sustainable development. In the area of water resources, a major focus has been on the promotion of public awareness of water resources and the establishment of regulatory framework for water conservation. ESCAP provides technical assistance to member countries in integrated water resources management, efficient water use, wastewater management, water quality control, and private sector involvement in the provision of safe water supply and sanitation services. Initiatives have also been taken to improve water services to the poor, which should assist countries in meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.

49. ESCAP continues to facilitate and strengthen regional and subregional cooperation, as well as networking for the effective implementation of regional initiatives and is considering convening a senior-level policy forum on follow-up to the World Summit to jump start the implementation at the regional level of the commitments undertaken at the Summit.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

50. For ECLAC, the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development began in Johannesburg, where, together with the Government of Mexico, UNDP and the Andean Development Corporation (ADC), it co-organized on 3 September 2002 a side event on "Financing and investment for sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean: regional perspectives on the fulfilment of the Monterrey Consensus and the Plan of Implementation for Johannesburg". The goal of this event was to link the achievements of the Monterrey Summit with the Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation of the Johannesburg Summit. The event provided an opportunity to examine the regional challenges to financing for sustainable development and to obtaining additional resources — both public

and private — towards the creation of cooperation opportunities for the public and private sectors and the regional multilateral financial organizations.

51. Since October 2002, ECLAC, together with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), has started implementing a project, "Policy strategies for sustainable development in Latin America", focusing on renewable energy and fiscal policy. Also in October 2002, ECLAC organized a dialogue among Latin American and Caribbean Governments and civil society representatives on the follow-up to the Access Principle of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which is part of the Johannesburg Action Plan. In January 2003, ECLAC, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and GTZ organized a workshop on "Fiscal policy and environment in the Latin American and the Caribbean countries". Finally, in March 2003, ECLAC organized, together with the National Commission for the Environment of Chile (CONAMA), the University of Chile, and Resources and Research for Sustainable Development (RIDES), the "Third academic dialogue on the environment" which focused on the implementation of the Johannesburg commitments on energy.

Economic Commission for Africa

52. The World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation reserves a special chapter for Africa which affirms the international community's commitment to support sustainable development in Africa through addressing the special challenges facing the region by taking concrete actions to further implement Agenda 21 within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In conformity with the World Summit, ECA has revised the medium-term plan of its subprogramme "Fostering sustainable development in Africa" with the explicit objective of supporting the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and NEPAD during the 2004-2005 biennium.

53. On the institutional side, at the thirty-first session of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in October 2002, it was decided to strengthen the Committee on Sustainable Development, by merging it with the Committee on Natural Resources and Science and Technology. The broadened Committee will provide a comprehensive platform for advocacy and the assessment of follow-up activities by African Governments to regional and global plans of action. The Committee on Sustainable Development will meet in October 2003 and discuss some key issues pertaining to sustainable development in Africa, including food security, science and technology and the follow-up to the World Summit Plan of Implementation.

54. ECA is currently preparing a biennial publication, *Tracking Sustainable Development in Africa*, that will provide key indicators of sustainable development and livelihood (featuring critical elements of the economic, social, institutional and environmental dimensions of sustainability), highlight best practices and provide in-depth analyses of selected themes on sustainable development. In addition, to reflect better the integrated nature of sustainable development challenges, ECA plans to broaden the composition of its Conference of African Ministers to incorporate key policy makers directly concerned with natural resources and environmental matters, such as ministers of agriculture and the environment.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

55. The regional preparatory process organized by ESCWA for the World Summit on Sustainable Development contributed to the adoption of the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development and of the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, which was launched in Johannesburg.

56. At its fourteenth session, held in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, on 23 and 24 October 2002, the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) called for the establishment of a joint bureau comprising ESCWA, the technical secretariat of the League of Arab States, CAMRE and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) to follow up on the World Summit Plan of Implementation at the regional level. The newly established regional mechanism and joint secretariat adopted a "bottom-up" approach, beginning at the national level, for achieving sustainable development in the region. This mechanism was the result of a study, carried out by ESCWA with funding from CAMRE, on the requirements for its operationalization by the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region. As a practical step in this direction, ESCWA integrated all of its work programme activities relevant to the Arab initiative into a matrix that reflects the real sustainable developmental needs of the region. The objectives, time frame, targets and potential partners for each activity are also specified in the matrix.

57. ESCWA, jointly with the League of Arab States, UNEP/ROWA and the Arab Media Forum for Environment and Development, organized a workshop on strengthening the role of the Arab media in order to achieve sustainable development, which was held in Beirut from 25 to 27 February 2003. The aim of the workshop was to adopt a strategy and action plan for the Arab media on achieving sustainable development, with a view to harnessing the media as a partner for furthering environmental issues. ESCWA will also hold regional meetings to follow up on the implementation of Johannesburg Summit resolutions and the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, to be jointly organized with CAMRE and UNEP/ROWA.

3. Regional preparations for the international meeting to review implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

58. Small island developing States of the Asian and Pacific region were involved very closely in the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Following the Summit, ESCAP organized two capacity-building subregional workshops: the Pacific Subregional Workshop on Strategic Environmental Management, in Apia, Samoa, from 19 to 22 May 2003, and the Subregional Workshop on Integration of Environmental Considerations into Economic Policy Making Processes for Pacific Islands, in Suva, Fiji, from 1 to 7 June 2003.

59. These workshops are part of the regional preparatory process for the international meeting to review implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Preparations for the regional preparatory meeting have been initiated in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), which has established a task force that

will, inter alia, advise on: (a) inputs for the preparation of reports of the Secretary-General and other analytical inputs for the international meeting; and (b) various organizational matters of interest to the United Nations system in general in support of intergovernmental preparatory meetings and the international meeting. Apart from the support provided to its Pacific members through the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, located in Vanuatu, ESCAP will hold later this year a meeting of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

60. The ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, in its role as co-responsible secretariat for the Programme of Action in the Caribbean, is coordinating together with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) the subregional preparatory process for the 2004 international meeting. The details of the preparatory process are being developed on the basis of consultations among the member countries and with the agencies that collaborate in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

61. What is envisaged for the subregional preparations is further mobilization of the "Caribbean model" for the implementation of the Programme of Action. The "model" includes a joint secretariat within which the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean constitutes the technical and operational arm for coordinating the implementation of the Programme of Action, while the CARICOM secretariat is entrusted with political outreach. Other elements of the "model" are a Small Island Developing States Bureau, for political and ministerial oversight of the implementation of the Programme of Action; a joint work programme extrapolated from the Programme of Action and related international decisions, such as those of the World Summit on Sustainable Development; and an Inter-Agency Collaborative Group comprised of a number of regional and international agencies which have accepted to execute the joint work programme in areas falling within their respective mandates. Integral to the preparatory process is the convening of meetings of the Caribbean small island developing States and the collaborating agencies scheduled for 10 and 11 April 2003. The culmination of the preparatory process will be the convening of the second Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, scheduled for the second half of 2003.

4. Regional preparations for the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

62. In its preparations for the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation, to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 25 to 29 August 2003, ESCAP undertook a series of case studies that identified the common issues and concerns related to physical and non-physical barriers that characterize the transit transport systems of the region. The secretariat also developed a methodology to help identify and quantify bottlenecks, bringing greater focus and clarity to a number of priority policy recommendations. The methodology, the results of the subregional studies pertaining to its 12 landlocked member States, and a framework

of recommendations were considered and refined through four subregional meetings, with the participation of member States, international organizations, donors and the private sector. In lieu of the regional intergovernmental preparatory meeting, the Commission in the first phase of its fifty-ninth session, considered transit transport issues in landlocked and transit developing countries as part of its main agenda. The Commission endorsed a regional platform for submission to the International Ministerial Conference.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

63. The Latin American regional preparatory meeting for the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation took place in Asunción, Paraguay, on 12 and 13 March 2003. The meeting was organized by the Government of Paraguay in collaboration with ECLAC and the United Nations High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The outcome of the regional meeting, the Regional Action Programme, included proposals such as: the formulation and execution of regional policies for the development of transport infrastructure focusing on the problems and needs of landlocked countries; support to the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America; improvement of transport infrastructure; facilitation of regional trade; and the identification of innovative financing mechanisms to enhance transport infrastructure. ECLAC was requested to focus its technical assistance on the strengthening of transport efficiency, including the application of information technology and simplification and harmonization of documents and procedures.

Economic Commission for Africa

64. The main purpose of the regional meeting, organized by ECA in close collaboration with the High Representative, UNCTAD and the World Bank (Addis Ababa, 5-7 May 2003), was to provide an opportunity for the 15 African landlocked and transit developing countries to review developments and to identify the constraints and needs for transit infrastructure development, trade facilitation measures and international support measures. The meeting formulated a Regional Action Plan that addressed important issues, inter alia the rehabilitation and upgrading of key transport infrastructure, including roads, railways, ports and communications; trade facilitation; and international support measures. ECA has assisted African Governments in identifying key transport corridors in Africa and in the development of bilateral and multilateral agreements to facilitate the efficient movement of goods and persons. ECA is also developing performance indicators to monitor road transport operations along the key corridors. In the context of the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, ECA has been the lead agency in the implementation of key programmes and activities, including promotion of the projects submitted by the 15 African landlocked countries. The evaluation report for the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa provides for successor arrangements as part of what was proposed as "the way forward" to attain the objectives of the Decade.

5. Outcome of regional preparatory meetings for the World Summit on the Information Society

Economic Commission for Europe

65. In the preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society, ECE has provided a regional platform for information and communications technology (ICT) policy discussion and formulation. In particular, the Commission supported the Pan-European Regional Ministerial Conference organized and hosted by Romania in Bucharest from 7 to 9 November 2002. The Conference, which benefited from substantive inputs emerging from three subregional meetings held in Bishkek, Moscow and Belgrade in September and October 2002, adopted a policy declaration that identifies and clearly formulates the fundamental principles of the information society, providing an effective framework for planning, monitoring and evaluating plans of action, initiatives and partnerships.

66. In addition to providing the major substantive inputs of ECE to the Pan-European Regional Ministerial Conference, ECE organized two events that were important parts of the Bucharest Conference: first, a parallel event on Building a Gender Sensitive Information Society (which was quoted as a "best practice" in including gender perspective in the World Summit on the Information Society process); and second, a thematic workshop on E-policy and E-regulations.

67. The outcome of the Bucharest process, together with the political declarations adopted at the four other regional conferences, was used as a background document for the declaration of principles and the plan of action that were drafted during the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva in February 2003.

68. ECE has been promoting coordination among its various intergovernmental bodies in order to establish an integrated approach to policy and a consistent programme in the field of ICT, on the one hand, and partnership with various relevant organizations in the United Nations system including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the ICT Task Force of the United Nations on the other. Within the secretariat, it has established an internal task force, the Information Society Team, to share information and to coordinate activities across sectors. Also, with the objective of bringing together various stakeholders and contributing to the World Summit and to the activities of the ICT Task Force of the United Nations, ECE launched the European and Central Asian regional nodes of the ICT Task Force. A web site for the Geneva node of the ICT Task Force (http://www.unece.org/etrades/ict) has also been activated with a view to making available information on the relevant activities in this field in the region and providing links to the ICT Task Force, the Moscow node, the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN), and the European database on public administration and e-government.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

69. The Regional Ministerial Preparatory Conference was jointly organized by the Government of Japan and ESCAP and held in Tokyo from 13 to 15 January 2003. Other regional and international organizations, such as the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, UNDP, ITU, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations University and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

made substantial contributions to the Conference. The Conference identified the critical issues faced by the developing countries in the region in harnessing the potential of ICT for development and bridging the digital divide, as well as in formulating national and regional plans, policies and mechanisms for addressing those issues and contributing to the goal included among the Millennium Development Goals of ensuring that the benefits of technology, especially ICT, were available to all. With this in view, the Conference formulated and adopted the "Tokyo Declaration — the Asia-Pacific perspective on the World Summit on the Information Society".

70. The Declaration identified critical issues in the region requiring urgent attention from the international and regional community, which also reflected the concerns raised by the ESCAP members on issues relating to cyber-crime and security, the application of ICT by people with disabilities, ICT and gender, and e-commerce. For ESCAP, in particular, the Declaration could serve as a guiding principle for its current and future activities in ICT. The regional exchange of experiences and best practices, the regional networking of initiatives, and the creation and pursuit of a common regional vision could play a decisive role in accelerating the transition towards the information society.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

71. From 29 to 31 January 2003, ministers and other governmental authorities representing the countries in the ECLAC region, along with representatives of international and multilateral bodies, civil society and the private sector, met in Bavaro, Dominican Republic, for the Regional Preparatory Ministerial Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean for the World Summit on the Information Society. The Conference was organized by the Government of the Dominican Republic, through the Dominican telecommunications institute (Instituto Dominicano de las Telecomunicaciones, INDOTEL) and ECLAC.

72. At the conclusion of the Conference, countries adopted the Bavaro Declaration on the information society. The declaration states that the information society is an economic and social system where knowledge and information constitute the fundamental sources of well-being and progress. The information society also represents an opportunity for countries and societies of the region, so long as it is understood that the development of that society within a global and local context requires a deeper appreciation of fundamental principles such as those of respect for human rights within the broader context of fundamental rights, democracy, environmental protection, the advancement of peace, the right to development, fundamental freedoms, economic progress and social equity. The Bavaro Declaration also affirms that the countries of the region are aware of the need to generate equal opportunities for access and use of information and communication technologies, and are committed to taking action to overcome the digital divide.

Economic Commission for Africa

73. Within the context of its mandated role of supporting the development of the information society in Africa and preparing African member States for participation in the World Summit on the Information Society, several regional-level activities were undertaken by ECA in collaboration with other United Nations and regional organizations. The most important of these activities was the African Regional

Conference on the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Bamako, Mali, from 25 to 30 May 2002.

74. The Bamako Conference was aimed at promoting a common understanding and vision of the benefits for Africa of the information society; the contributions that the continent can make towards achieving the goals of a global information society; and the cultural values it wishes to preserve in the process. The Conference examined the major challenges, prospects and constraints posed by the information society in Africa. More specifically, it provided an opportunity for African countries to share experiences and adopt a common position on the key issues for the World Summit. A major outcome of the Conference was the adoption of the Bamako Declaration, which provides the blue print for Africa's participation in the various phases of the World Summit. The Declaration served as a substantive input to the first session of the global Preparatory Committee, held in Geneva in July 2002. At Bamako, member States also took the opportunity to assess progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the first African Development Forum, which was held in December 1999 on the theme "The challenge to Africa of globalization and the information age", and renewed their commitment to the African information society.

75. ECA played a significant role in organizing the African Regional Conference and has been designated as the secretariat for follow-up activities to the Bamako Conference. In this regard, ECA has facilitated dialogue among various stakeholders through the establishment of electronic discussion forums and workshops that have brought together Governments, civil society, academic institutions and Africans in the diaspora to define their respective roles in developing an information society and in preparing the continent for the World Summit. In addition, during the period under review, ECA organized national workshops in eight countries where national ICT strategies and plans have been developed or are in the process of being developed: Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Niger and Uganda. ECA also plans to organize a regional information society forum in mid-2003 to build consensus among African countries on an African vision of the information society based on the Bamako Declaration.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

76. ESCWA held the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society in Beirut from 4 to 6 February 2003, in partnership with the UNESCO regional office in Cairo, the World Bank Information for Development Program and the ICT Task Force of the United Nations. The overall purpose of the Conference, which brought together government representatives, experts and civil society and private sector institution participants, was to address the central issues raised by the information society relating to policy formulation, socio-economic development and cultural, ethical and technological concerns. The Conference promoted a common vision for the development of the information society both at the national and regional levels, and to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

77. The Conference resulted in the adoption of the Declaration of Principles, which contained recommendations on key issues facing the region in the area of ICT. The recommendations covered the formulation of national and regional ICT policies; enhancing ICT infrastructure; developing appropriate ICT indicators;

implementing and standardizing e-government applications; promoting e-learning, e-health and e-business applications and tools; promoting digital content in Arabic; developing human capacity in ICT through training and education; and developing ICT production capabilities and improving ICT services.

C. Improved coordination and cooperation among United Nations agencies at the regional level: meetings chaired by the Executive Secretaries in the five regions

78. In annex III to its resolution 1998/46 the Economic and Social Council called on the commissions to hold yearly coordination meetings so as to bring about greater coherence in the activities of the United Nations system at the regional level. The regional commissions continue to hold these meetings and the Deputy Secretary-General plans to chair a new series of these meetings starting in the second half of 2003.

Economic Commission for Europe

79. The 2002 Regional Coordination Meeting for the ECE Region, which was held on 10 December 2002, focused on the needs, trends and challenges for the region, the respective programmes of the United Nations organizations and agencies working in the region, and the impact of the EU enlargement on their work. Reform in the United Nations system was also discussed. A number of commonly shared points were emphasized by participants, including: (a) the immense diversity of the region and the numerous conflicts which impede its development; the foundation for success of all work in the region depends on the region's stability, which is linked to the promotion of human rights, security and conflict prevention; (b) the humanitarian needs in the subregions of Europe, in particular, South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which necessitates intensified poverty reduction and economic sustainability programmes; (c) the challenge of EU enlargement and the need to promote cooperation between the acceding countries and the non-acceding countries; and (d) the challenge of managing the discrepancy between declining donor interest and growing development needs, as well as the need for donor cooperation. The discussion confirmed the potential for better cooperation among organizations on a variety of issues, many of which have cross-border/cross-sectoral dimensions (for example, the environment, labour, trade, information technology). It was not enough, however, simply to agree on general areas of cooperation as this would not automatically lead to integrated action. With this in mind, the suggestion was made that in the future the Regional Coordination Meeting should be comprised of a morning session devoted to a discussion of "over-arching issues", while the afternoon would be devoted to a discussion of a concrete programme, with a view to defining new cooperation or extending existing cooperation. It was also suggested that meetings needed to be convened more frequently than once a year.

80. With regard to reform, a number of issues were flagged as meriting future discussion. These included the need for a review and harmonization of mandates among organizations working in similar fields, the need to involve the private sector as an equal partner, the need to harmonize programme cycles and simplify rules and procedures, the need to rationalize consultative, negotiating and evaluation

processes with a view to releasing time and increasing the capacity to implement the programmes, the need to have an in-depth discussion on the concept of civil society and how to associate it in a productive and functional way in the organizations' work, and the need to design new modalities for better associating regional and local municipalities in the work of organizations.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

81. The regional coordination mechanism (RCM) operates actively under the leadership of ESCAP in the form of Heads of Agency Meetings (HoAM)/RCM which are convened on a quarterly basis. Under HoAM/RCM, there exist 11 thematic working groups on specific issues requiring the involvement of various related agencies, as well as two committees on administrative management and security and on programme review and coordination.

82. HoAM/RCM noted the need to address more substantive regional issues of common concern to the United Nations system and, in this regard, each session of the HoAM/RCM took up an issue that required collective and coordinated follow-up actions. For example, the Thematic Working Group on Environment and Development discussed modalities of monitoring and reviewing progress towards meeting the benchmarks and targets of the World Summit for Social Development, including the possibility of organizing a regional meeting in cooperation with the Summit secretariat.

83. HoAM/RCM assisted ESCAP in the preparation of the theme study for the fifty-ninth Commission session, which focused on HIV/AIDS. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) participated in developing recommendations aimed at increasing the political commitment in the region to fight the epidemic and producing concrete action plans to serve as a follow-up to the United Nations General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS. HoAM/RCM also organized a joint United Nations staff awareness-training programme on HIV/AIDS, aimed at implementing the United Nations staff policies on HIV/AIDS, and the majority of the personnel of the United Nations and non-United Nations agencies at Bangkok participated in it.

84. In accordance with the sunset clause, thematic working groups were reviewed in terms of their relevance to current needs. As a result, the group on Social Summit follow-up was abolished and the functions of the group on governance and human rights and the group on poverty alleviation, rural development and food security were reframed. A thematic working group on the Millennium Development Goals was recently established. ESCAP chaired or co-chaired the thematic working groups on women's empowerment and gender equality; environment and development; disability-related concerns; poverty reduction and food security; education for all; information and communication technology; and Millennium Development Goals. The groups as a whole reflected a "Bangkok consensus" on the priorities for the region.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

85. The fourth Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Meeting, to be held in the second half of 2003, will focus on three issues: (a) cooperation initiatives among various entities to optimize the work of the Organization in the framework of the

Millennium Development Goals and the reform process; (b) regional follow-up activities to United Nations summits and conferences in the socio-economic area; and (c) regional technical cooperation activities in the socio-economic area.

86. As a contribution to inter-agency coordination, ECLAC developed a web site for the follow-up to United Nations summits and conferences. It includes a decentralized management module to allow each agency to present its contributions to the various international conferences. This tool, to be launched during the fourth Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Meeting, will facilitate the exchange of information required for improving inter-agency coordination, as well as the dissemination of information on the work carried out by the United Nations in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

87. ECLAC has continued to promote inter-agency coordination at the sectorial and subregional levels. It convened the eleventh Meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System on the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile, on 4 September 2002. The meeting noted the efforts being made to improve gender statistics and reached agreement on further work in the area, including coordination of technical assistance; support to institutions that produce information and linking them with government and civil society users; and stepping up horizontal cooperation among countries for sharing experience and knowledge.

88. At the subregional level, ECLAC convened the Joint Meeting of the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean and the Agencies Members of the Inter-Agency Collaborative Group in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on 11 April 2003. The meeting focused on a review of the implementation in the Caribbean of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and of the preparations for the 2004 international meeting. The meeting agreed that the Caribbean subregional preparatory meeting for the international meeting should be held from 25 to 27 August, to be followed by a joint meeting of the Caribbean small island developing States and small island developing States from other geographical regions.

Economic Commission for Africa

89. At the third Annual Regional Consultations of United Nations Agencies working in Africa, held in October 2001, it was agreed that NEPAD would provide the main operational framework around which the United Nations system should coordinate its support to Africa. The seven thematic clusters established at the third consultation in October 2001 were reduced to five in 2002 in response to the immediate priorities identified in the NEPAD Initial Action Plan. It was agreed that the work of each of the five clusters would be facilitated by a lead agency that would act as convenor of the respective cluster meetings and report on the activities of the clusters, as follows: ECA: infrastructure development — water and sanitation, energy, transport and ICT; UNDP: governance, peace and security; FAO: agriculture, trade and market access; UN-Habitat: environment, population and urbanization; UNICEF: human resource development, employment and HIV/AIDS. The agencies identified priority areas for joint action under each of the five clusters and agreed on modalities of cooperation at the national, subregional and regional levels. They suggested that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations and the African Union should

be invited to participate in future meetings of the cluster on governance, peace and security. It was also agreed that the African Development Bank should be invited to participate in future meetings of all of the clusters. The central role of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) at the subregional level was underscored and agencies, working through the cluster arrangements, would work very closely with the RECs and the NEPAD secretariat to advance joint activities in order to build the capacity of the subregional institutions. At the regional level, it was agreed that the consultations should be convened at least once, and possibly twice, a year and that the Executive Secretary would periodically call meetings of the five cluster convenors together with the NEPAD secretariat around major events. In addition, the five cluster convenors should organize their respective cluster meetings in close cooperation with the NEPAD secretariat, which would serve as co-convenor when possible.

90. The Consultations agreed that cluster members, with the help of the convenors, would continue their interaction through electronic discussions and meetings, and would further refine agreed areas of cooperation by identifying benchmarks for measuring success, as well as timelines. Most clusters agreed to meet at least twice a year and to cooperate closely with the RECs in undertaking activities in support of the implementation of NEPAD at the subregional level. With regard to reporting, the Consultations agreed that a consolidated report based on the work of the clusters would be prepared and forwarded to the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa for inclusion in the Secretary-General's report on Africa.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

91. The meeting of the Regional Coordination Group (RCG), held in Beirut on 28 June 2002, focused on: (a) the specifications and content of the RCG web site, the mechanism for launching the collective work of the United Nations organizations operating in the Arab region; (b) the role of United Nations regional organizations in promoting economic and social development in the region; (c) issues that lend themselves to concerted action; and (d) exchange of experiences and best practices in cooperative action among two or more organizations.

92. The participants agreed on the need for: (a) a mechanism for preparing and distributing reports on the collective activities of the United Nations organizations in the region; (b) collecting and coordinating information on trends in the region in various socio-economic areas, with a view to arriving at a common vision thereof; (c) using the RCG web site, which would be available first in English and later in Arabic, as a platform for disseminating the information in question; (d) formulating a vision and a strategy for the region that would form the basis for collective action; and (e) agreeing on areas of cooperation: information and communication technologies and action in follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society were identified as areas for collaborative action, owing to the significance of this issue within the context of globalization.

II. The regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations

A. Participation in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs

93. During the period under review, the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions continued to participate actively in the work of the Committee and considered with other members the necessary steps to be undertaken by the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs in response to the Secretary-General's reform proposals. In particular, they focused on the reform proposals relating to the formulation of the Medium-Term Plan and the programme budget in the economic and social area and on the need to clarify roles in technical cooperation (recommendation 15). This resulted in an in-depth review of the activities of the members of the Executive Committee, which provided a better appreciation and understanding of the commissions' activities in analysis and norm setting, as well as in the provision of technical assistance. Moreover, the joint review of the projects proposed for funding under the Development Account has led to the creation of a habit of collaboration among the global entities and the regional commissions, which could be extended to other areas of budget implementation.

B. Cooperation with global entities: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Development Programme

1. Cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

94. The regional commissions cooperate closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in a number of areas, particularly those of sustainable development, ICT, statistics, the advancement of women and economic analysis and development policy. Examples of such cooperation are as follows.

Economic Commission for Europe

95. With regard to statistics, the work of the Statistics Division of the United Nations is reflected in the integrated presentation of the international statistical work prepared for the Conference of European Statisticians serviced by ECE. In turn, the ECE Statistical Division takes part in the work of the Statistical Commission that is serviced by DESA. Data collection is another area of cooperation: the ECE Statistical Division collects data from the CIS countries on national accounts and submits them to the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat. ECE also provides to the Statistical Division and the Development Policy Analysis Division of the United Nations Secretariat the national accounts data for all ECE transition economies. On the other hand, the ECE Statistical Division uses foreign trade statistics from the Comtrade database maintained in New York.

96. ECE also cooperates with DESA in the field of economic analysis, with DESA regularly consulting the Commission on developments in the transition economies for its report on the world economy. In addition, the two organizations collaborated in the preparation of the ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, held in September 2002.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

97. ESCAP and DESA cooperated on planning the plenary segment of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and have closely collaborated on regional follow-up to the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit, including with regard to modalities for regional implementation, as well as review and assessment of the Plan of Implementation.

98. In the area of the advancement of women, ESCAP and DESA jointly organized the Judicial Colloquium on the Application of International Human Rights Law at the Domestic Level in November 2002 and collaborated in planning a subregional training workshop for government officials to strengthen their understanding of the legal obligations established in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to enhance their capacity to report under article 18 of that Convention. Together, they organized the second Africa/Asia Parliamentarian Forum on Human Security and Gender "The role of the legislature", which aimed to enhance the role of parliamentarians in promoting gender equality in relation to human security aspects of the Millennium Development Goals.

99. In the area of statistical development, ESCAP cooperated with DESA in the implementation of the Development Account project on strengthening regional capacities for statistics development in South-East Asia, the aim of which is to develop a South-East Asian statistical information exchange network to strengthen capacities to respond to data needs in the subregion and to support regional training in the area of statistics. In addition, they have jointly organized technical meetings and workshops for the region, including on implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA), trade statistics for least developed and small island developing countries, and classifications.

100. In the area of development policy and research, ESCAP and DESA are jointly planning a training programme for approximately 25 government-nominated persons working on building capacities to undertake research on issues related to ageing in Asia.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

101. Within the context of Project Link,[2] ECLAC and DESA jointly provided technical assistance aimed at strengthening the capacity of Latin American countries, especially those in Central America, to carry out macroeconomic model building. ECLAC also collaborated with DESA in the diffusion of methodology and classifications of national accounts. In particular, ECLAC signed an agreement with the Statistics Division of the United Nations to disseminate the Spanish version of the "System of National Accounts news and notes" bulletin through its web site. Collaboration also extended to social statistics and currently both organizations are jointly implementing a Development Account project on strengthening of networking of institutions and experts to accelerate the development of social and environmental statistics in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. ECLAC and the Division for the Advancement of Women of DESA are executing another Development Account project on democratic governance and gender equality in Latin America and the Caribbean, whose objective is to strengthen the capacity of national machineries for the promotion of gender equity to integrate the demands and needs of women into the national agendas for good governance and State reform.

102. ECLAC continues to provide inputs on the Latin American and Caribbean economy to the DESA for the *World Economic Situation and Prospects* report.

Economic Commission for Africa

103. ECA participated in an ad hoc expert group meeting organized by DESA in Bahia, Brazil, in February 2003 on the theme, "Innovations in governance and public administration for poverty reduction". The meeting provided a forum for discussion and for the sharing of experience among experts on the following issues: policy development and implementation for poverty reduction; national planning for poverty reduction; mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction policies and strategies; and building national capacity for good governance and sound public administration for poverty reduction. ECA chaired the final session of the meeting, on the "way forward", at which policy-relevant recommendations were made on enhancing poverty reduction efforts.

104. ECA is also collaborating with DESA and UNCTAD in the preparation of a project to assist the United Republic of Tanzania in mainstreaming the contribution of mining in that country's development efforts. The project will undertake an assessment of policy-specific interventions for poverty alleviation in small-scale mining communities.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

105. Cooperation between ESCWA and DESA on youth issues involved a financial contribution from DESA for the preparation of the "Youth NGOs' Directory in the ESCWA Region" and the "Youth NGOs' Directory of Young Women's Organizations in the ESCWA Region", aimed at strengthening networking among youth NGOs. In addition, ESCWA collaborated with the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNESCO and the Department of Public Information (DPI) in organizing an expert group meeting on participation and access of women to the media and its impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (Beirut, November 2002).

106. Regarding the promotion of the social integration of the disabled, ESCWA is executing two projects funded by DESA on promoting self-reliance and income-generating activities for persons with disabilities. Cooperation between ESCWA and DESA also involves activities on ageing. ESCWA organized a round table on the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the year 2012. Both ESCWA and DESA also cooperated in the organization of a seminar on organization and management of statistical agencies, which was held to address strategic issues of the organization and management of official statistics (Muscat, April 2002).

2. Cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

107. Cooperation between UNCTAD and the regional commissions continues to be strong and draws on their respective comparative advantages. The Executive Secretaries and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD hold a joint meeting every other year, in connection with the session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva, to exchange views on how to provide joint support to developing and least developed countries, in particular for their integration into the global trading system.

Economic Commission for Europe

108. ECE has well-established cooperation with UNCTAD in the area of economic analysis. UNCTAD frequently draws on ECE work on transition economies and, in turn, ECE regularly relies on the UNCTAD *Trade and Development Report* as background information on the global context of the ECE economies.

109. In the area of trade, ECE participated in an international conference on harmonization and equivalence in organic agriculture, organized by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and UNCTAD. At the invitation of UNCTAD, the Chairman of the ECE Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies made a presentation on the relevant activities of the Working Party. As a follow-up to this conference, a decision was made to create a task force to prepare proposals for such harmonization. Representatives of ECE, UNCTAD, FAO, IFOAM and other interested agencies attended an organizational meeting held in Geneva in December 2002 and at present the ECE Working Party is cooperating with this task force on its possible future activities.

110. In the field of trade facilitation, UNCTAD is actively working with ECE in the preparation of the May 2003 International Forum on Trade Facilitation, Sharing the Gains of Globalization in the New Security Environment. UNCTAD is also a vice-chair of the International Trade Procedures Working Group, which is the core trade facilitation group of the ECE Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business. ECE and UNCTAD also cooperate on the implementation of trade facilitation recommendations, instruments and practices and exchange information and ideas on the developmental role of e-commerce. This includes outcomes from the work of the ECE Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development, which analyses e-commerce development in European transition economies and compares its status with that in developing countries.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

111. ESCAP has continued to collaborate closely with UNCTAD in the implementation of its regional activities, such as the Joint UNCTAD-ESCAP Asia-Pacific Regional Conference "E-Commerce Strategies for Development", at which they adopted a declaration on electronic commerce for development, resolving to strengthen their cooperation and commit themselves to taking action to develop and implement e-commerce strategies for development. The declaration was fed into the regional preparatory meeting for the World Summit on the Information Society held in Japan in January 2003.

112. With regard to the Doha Development Agenda, UNCTAD will provide a substantive contribution to the ESCAP Meeting of Senior Trade Officials on the WTO Negotiating Agenda: Regional Perspectives in Preparation for Cancun, to be held in Bangkok from 10 to 12 June 2003. UNCTAD has also provided substantive support to ESCAP activities on facilitating the accession of developing countries to WTO through regional cooperation.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

113. At the request of UNCTAD, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters in Mexico City launched the UNCTAD *Trade and Development Report, 2002* report in Latin America. UNCTAD and ECLAC shared ideas through a videoconference of the Expert Group on Competition Policy in Central America. In October 2002, ECLAC participated in two meetings organized by UNCTAD in Geneva on "Building capacity for improved policy making and negotiation on key trade and environment issues" and "Environmental requirements and international trade". In the spring of 2003, ECLAC and UNCTAD jointly organized in Havana, Cuba, an expert group meeting on environmental goods and services and a regional training course on capacity-building and technical cooperation for developing countries in support of their participation in the WTO Doha Programme.

Economic Commission for Africa

114. ECA organized an ad hoc expert group meeting on Africa and the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, in collaboration with UNCTAD and other organizations, in Addis Ababa in April 2003. The discussion focused on four interrelated issues, namely, market access for African agricultural products; domestic support and export subsidy policies, special provisions for developing countries; and "non-trade" concerns such as food security, rural development and poverty reduction. The recommendations adopted on these issues will be considered by another expert group meeting, which will be organized to prepare for the Conference of African Ministers of Trade scheduled to take place in Mauritius in June 2003.

115. In addition, ECA collaborated with UNCTAD and with other African regional organizations in a series of high-level workshops to assist African countries in understanding the issues involved in service trade negotiations as mandated under the WTO Agreements (Geneva, September 2002; Johannesburg, April 2002; and Addis Ababa, June 2003). The object of these workshops was to forge a common position on key issues ahead of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Meeting, scheduled to take place in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003. The recommendations made during these meetings are also expected to be endorsed by the Conference of African Ministers of Trade in Mauritius in June 2003.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

116. Cooperation between ESCWA and UNCTAD focused on FDI and other economic issues. The two organizations are implementing a project on networking of expertise on FDI in ESCWA member States. Under the project, a regional workshop on "International methodological standards for data compilation for foreign investment and the activities of transnational corporations" was organized in Beirut, in October/November 2002.

117. Another activity with UNCTAD was the organization of an expert group meeting on "Competition laws and policies: identification of common grounds in the ESCWA region" in Abu Dhabi, from 28 to 30 January 2002. The meeting provided a forum for discussing the interrelationships between competition, trade, development and FDI policies and laws in the Arab countries; promoting a dialogue between the private and public sectors on national competition policy; and formulating guidelines for developing good practices in competition laws and policies in ESCWA member countries.

3. Cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme

118. The significant scaling down of UNDP funding of technical cooperation projects executed by the regional commissions levelled off during the period under review. Cooperation between the commissions and their respective regional bureaux centred around specific themes or areas such as the environment and sustainable development, poverty reduction and statistics. Examples of this cooperation in these areas and others are given below. Some of the commissions also worked closely with the Resident Coordinator system and national UNDP offices in the preparation of the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework for some of their member countries.

Economic Commission for Europe

119. UNDP provided logistical support for the Environmental Performance Reviews conducted by ECE in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and Georgia, and financial support for national preparations for the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, to be held in Ukraine in May 2003, for which ECE is serving as secretariat.

120. UNDP has continued to provide funding for the ECE project which gives assistance to CEE and CIS countries for improving the statistics for human development reporting, and has provided funding for the ECE project on a gender statistics web site for Europe and North America. ECE and UNDP cooperated closely in developing the energy efficiency project for climate change mitigation. UNDP has also served as an implementing agency for Global Environment Facility projects elaborated by ECE and has provided direct assistance to Belarus for three such projects.

121. In the field of e-economy and ICT development, ECE developed a gender component of the UNDP regional project on e-governance, while UNDP contributed to the organization of the ECE round table on "Overcoming obstacles to the development of an information society: a business solution" in Geneva, in February 2003.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

122. In accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities, cooperation between ESCAP and UNDP has focused on the implementation of a three-year joint project on supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The project addresses a gap at the regional level with respect to support to countries in formulating and implementing effective poverty reduction strategies and monitoring their progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The aim of the project is to increase analytical and technical knowledge and capacities in the region and to assess regional progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals relating to poverty reduction. The project will also enable cross-fertilization of information and experiences, focusing on comparative analysis to identify and replicate good practices in poverty reduction. A major output of the project will be the production of two comprehensive reports on "Supporting Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific". In addition to quantitative data comparisons, the reports will illustrate regional trends and patterns in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, focusing on countries and clusters of countries.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

123. ECLAC coordinated the preparation of a report entitled "Meeting the Millennium poverty reduction targets in Latin America and the Caribbean" which synthesizes the findings of a joint UNDP/ECLAC technical cooperation project that evaluated the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean countries to meet the Millennium Development Goal relating to poverty. ECLAC also contributed substantively to the UNDP project on democracy and development in Latin America and organized a workshop on "Economy and democracy: the implications for Latin America" which was held in Santiago, Chile, on 29 and 30 November 2002. ECLAC also contributed to the UNDP project on democracy and institutions in Latin America, through sharing macroeconomic data, statistical information and political economy analysis of indicators on governance in the Andean region.

124. On financing for sustainable development, ECLAC and UNDP are working together on a project that has included the production of case studies on seven Latin American countries. They also jointly organized a side event on "Financing and investment for sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean" at the Johannesburg summit. On fiscal policy and the application of economic instruments for environmental management, ECLAC and UNDP have cooperated since 1999 on a project that has generated 10 national case studies, regional and national meetings and seminars, and the publication of various documents. Joint capacity-building activities are also under way.

125. ECLAC and UNDP also cooperated in providing technical assistance at the national level for: strengthening the energy sector (Cuba); reform of the social security system (Panama); elaboration of a national human development agenda (Belize); and formulation of a national gender policy and plan of action for the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs (Trinidad and Tobago). ECLAC and UNDP Cuba initiated a research project for a study on social development in the island. With UNDP Costa Rica, ECLAC made substantial statistical and analytical contributions to *State of the Region*, an annual report on economic and social development in Central America. ECLAC, UNDP and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) are planning a study on the economic costs of the impact on health of water pollution. In 2002, a similar study was prepared for the Mexican authorities. In Colombia, ECLAC and UNDP executed a joint project entitled "Support to the implementation of a system of indicators on sustainable development". ECLAC is also cooperating with UNDP in the implementation of extrabudgetary projects: one with UNDP El Salvador on "Support programme: violence in a transitional society" and one with UNDP/Mexico on "Updating and consolidation of the Mexican strategy for development cooperation", with emphasis on technical cooperation between developing countries. In El Salvador, in 2001, ECLAC and UNDP also cooperated on natural disaster evaluation missions.

Economic Commission for Africa

126. Collaboration involved participation in each other's meetings or the organization of joint activities. UNDP continued to participate in the regional coordination meetings of United Nations agencies in Africa held under the auspices of ECA. The two organizations also undertook joint activities at the national level within the context of the Resident Coordinator system and the Common Country

Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework in several countries in the region.

127. In May 2002, ECA and UNDP jointly convened the fifth Africa Governance Forum in Maputo, Mozambique, on the theme "Local governance and poverty reduction in Africa". The Forum brought together participants from government, civil society, the private sector and partner organizations to discuss the following issues: political leadership and participation; social services delivery for increased access and delivery; fiscal decentralization and financial management; and linkages and integration. A number of recommendations were adopted by the Forum.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

128. ESCWA has developed joint cooperation in the area of social development with UNDP national offices in the Arab world. It also collaborated with UNDP in implementing a project on gender statistics and on poverty issues. ESCWA and UNDP, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon, agreed to organize a series of training workshops on reform and capacity-building of the social development services centres. Moreover, both ESCWA and UNDP Lebanon organized a workshop on water tariffication and groundwater legislation in Beirut, in January 2003 under the project on a national policy framework for water resources management in Lebanon.

129. ESCWA and UNDP Jordan are jointly implementing a project, "Towards integrated social development policies in Jordan", aimed at supporting the development and enhancement of social policies in Jordan by surveying the Government's approach to social policy formulation. They will also collaborate in developing human development profiles and strategy for the country. With UNDP Iraq, ESCWA is assisting in the preparation of the National Human Development Report.

130. A major regional project in the area of statistics, initiated in 1997 and primarily funded by UNDP, deals with the development of national gender statistics programmes in the Arab countries. The project is currently being administered in 12 Arab countries and engages a wide spectrum of producers and users of gender statistics.

III. Interregional cooperation

A. Theme on interregional cooperation: "Development dimensions of trade negotiations: a regional perspective"

131. The Fourth WTO Ministerial Meeting, held in Doha in November 2001, offered assurances in regard to addressing the development concerns of the developing countries, thus signalling a significant departure from the previous eight rounds of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. Indeed, the Doha Declaration affirmed to seek to place the developing countries' "*needs and interests at the heart of the Work Programme*".[3] Further, the declaration recognized "*the particular vulnerability of the least developed countries and the special structural difficulties they face in the global economy*" and expressed commitment "*to addressing the marginalization of the least developed countries in international trade and to improving their effective*

participation in the multilateral trading system".[4] The Doha negotiating agenda includes areas of interest to all countries, among them: agriculture; services; market access for non-agricultural products; trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPs), particularly as they relate to public health; WTO rules on anti-dumping measures, subsidies and regional trade agreements; the Dispute Settlement Understanding; the relationship between trade and the environment; electronic commerce; provisions for special and differential treatment; the relationship between trade, debt and finance; trade and transfer of technology; technical cooperation and capacity-building, the relationship between trade and investment; the interaction between trade and competition policy; transparency in government procurement; and trade facilitation. A further decision on negotiations on the four latter topics will be taken, by explicit consensus, at the Cancun Ministerial Conference, in September 2003.

Status of negotiations following the Doha Ministerial Meeting

132. The Doha agenda is ambitious and wide-ranging. Given the overriding importance of the negotiations and their implications for national and international initiatives for development, the regional commissions are endeavouring to enhance the capacity of developing countries to formulate and implement strategies for benefiting from economic globalization, strengthening their negotiating positions within WTO and promoting intraregional trade as a step towards integration into the global economy.

133. At the heart of the Doha agenda stand the liberalization of agricultural production and trade, and the implementation-related issues and concerns, broadly defined. The failure of negotiations to cut trade-distorting farm subsidies and the failure to reach agreement on the scope of talks for freeing up trade in agriculture by the deadline of 31 March 2003 have been a serious setback. Agriculture is a critical area for most developing and least developed countries and no single change would make a greater contribution to development and poverty alleviation than fully opening the markets of developed countries to goods produced by developing countries. Similarly, missing the deadlines for the negotiations on special and differential treatment, as well as on access to essential medicines for countries without local manufacturing capacity, was deeply disturbing for engaged developing countries.

134. Effective and beneficial participation of the developing countries in WTO is indispensable in order for them to avoid marginalization in a rapidly globalizing world economy. Yet, the obstacles that they face are formidable. Vast numbers of them remain outside WTO. Even for a sizeable number of WTO members, the complexities of the various legally binding agreements under the WTO regimes, including the General Agreement on Trade in Service (GATS), are difficult to comply with. A new and expanded GATS could contain a new and broader definition of "service" covered by the agreement, as well as other new provisions. Even without new and additional complexities, many developing countries seriously lack the capacity to take advantage of the WTO provisions to advance their national interests. For instance, in the eight years during which WTO has been active, 300 cases have been submitted to its Dispute Settlement Body, individually or jointly. Among the developing countries, those of the Latin American and Caribbean region made the most use of this body. The countries of this region, either individually or with others, were involved in almost 23 per cent of all requests for consultation.[5]

135. UNCTAD and the regional commissions, as well as other relevant organizations of the United Nations, have been providing analytical inputs for a proactive development agenda, as the developing countries prepare for negotiations in the Doha Development Round. Just as they sought to promote the meeting of minds in their respective regions prior to the Fourth WTO Ministerial Meeting in Doha, they are making similar efforts in preparation for the Fifth Ministerial Meeting, to be held in Cancun, Mexico, from 10 to 14 September 2003, through organizing policy meetings at the intergovernmental level, the issuance of recurrent and non-recurrent publications, and the holding of seminars and workshops.

136. Many developing countries, including the WTO members, especially the smaller economies and those belonging to disadvantaged categories, such as least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States, require sustained support in institution-building, in developing their knowledge base relating to the WTO legal framework and implementation of its various agreements, and in formulating national policies and regulations. Though most of these functions are primarily carried out by WTO and UNCTAD through their technical cooperation programmes, the regional commissions, in view of their geographical proximity and considerations of cost-effectiveness, very often cooperate with the global organizations in the implementation of those programmes. Indeed, both WTO and UNCTAD have ongoing cooperation arrangements, including memorandums of understanding, with the regional commissions for providing support to the developing countries. Since 2000, ESCAP and WTO have been implementing a joint programme of technical assistance in the ESCAP region that has been commended by the Commission for the valuable capacity-building opportunities it provides to developing countries. The programme consists of biannual two-week trade policy courses and specialized seminars on the ongoing Doha negotiations. Likewise, ECLAC hosted a two-week regional training course, organized by UNCTAD, on key issues on the international economic agenda, especially in the context of the current multilateral trade negotiations; and ESCWA and WTO organized a training workshop on trade in services for Arab countries, in December 2002. ESCWA, in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), also organized a special symposium on intellectual property rights for the Lebanese judiciary, in August 2002. All of the regional commissions offer advisory services on procedures for accession to WTO and on trade policy issues.

137. Despite the avowed intention of WTO to achieve "universality", a large number of countries, almost invariably belonging to the developing category, remain outside of the WTO regime. As of April 2003, among the members and associate members of the regional commissions, as many as 29 remained in the "observer" category, while another 33 had "no status".[6] Most of those outside WTO belong in one or more of the vulnerable categories (19 least developed countries, including 9 in Africa; 12 island developing countries; 14 landlocked developing countries). Some of the above "outsiders" have remained engaged in negotiations to gain membership almost since WTO came into existence in 1995, while a few others started their accession negotiations even before 1995, under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Currently, only article XII of the Agreement establishing WTO governs this situation, by simply stating, "Any State or separate customs territory ... may accede to this Agreement on terms to be agreed between it and the WTO". In practice, the ambiguity of the provision leaves space for all kinds of pressure. The lessons drawn from experience in the negotiations of the countries

seeking accession show, inter alia, lingering delays, significant lack of understanding by some of the applicants as to the implications of certain WTO rules for their economies, refusal by some members to extend to the applicants the benefits of certain "Uruguay Round methodologies" (for example, special safeguard provisions under article 5) and refusal by some members to provide a reasonable transition period for implementation of complex agreements, such as the TRIPs Agreement.[7]

138. Studies have shown that commitments by newly acceding members are generally higher than those of WTO members at comparable levels of development.[8] Notably, no LDC has managed to accede to WTO since its establishment in January 1995 and only one of them (Vanuatu) has completed the negotiations. The European Union (EU) has been suggesting that a "fast track approach" should be applied for LDCs. The EU gave some hints about what it meant by this fast track in defining minimum criteria and procedures: (i) automatic eligibility of all acceding LDCs for all provisions for special and differential treatment in existing WTO agreements; (ii) taking full account of the constraints under which LDCs act when seeking concessions from them; and (iii) providing adequate technical support during the accession process.[9] The High-level Brainstorming Meeting for African Trade Negotiators Preparatory to the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference, organized by ECA and the Organization of African Unity, in collaboration with UNCTAD, WTO and the African Economic Research Consortium in June 2001, proposed that acceding Governments not be asked to undertake more stringent obligations than present WTO members, and stressed the importance of providing adequate transition periods for acceding countries. Further, it agreed that a "positive negotiating agenda" would need to reflect implementation of the WTO provisions on "special and differential treatment" for developing countries. Consequently, a significant development was the adoption by the WTO General Council, in December 2002, of guidelines to streamline the accession of LDCs. However, their effectiveness remains to be tested.

Regional scenerios and integration groupings

139. In a multipolar trading world of multiple and complex interests, regionalism has gained increasing attention from countries, developed and developing alike, as an attractive strategy to pursue their economic interests. Consequently, of the 200 or so regional trading arrangements (RTAs) that have been notified to the GATT/WTO over the past 50 years, almost half were concluded after 1990, especially in the latter stages of the Uruguay Round, following recurring delays in bringing the Round to a successful conclusion. Currently, all major trading countries belong to one, or more typically two or three, RTAs or to some kind of regional integration arrangements. The regional initiatives are important for two reasons. First, regional agreements are generally concluded between major trading partners and therefore have an immediate and significant impact on imports and exports. Second, regional commitments often go much further than those taken at the multilateral level. With regard to import tariffs, many of the preferential trade agreements actually require zero import tariffs; this is not the case in the WTO negotiations.

140. Regional trade, in general, continues to occupy an ever-increasing share of global trade.[10] RTAs offer not only a cushion against the volatilities of the global situation, they also enable countries to gain significant experience in dealing with a multilateral trading system. It is, however, essential that RTAs remain open trading

arrangements and WTO-consistent. Acceding to such RTAs helps countries carry out economic reforms, lower barriers to trade and strengthen ties and relations with other countries whose support can be useful in the WTO accession negotiations. RTAs should be seen only as complementing — and never as substituting for — the global trading arrangement under the WTO process.

141. Over the past decade, the ECE region has been undergoing major changes in trade relations. The extensive trade liberalization in the former centrally planned economies since 1989 and, more recently, the ongoing process of seeking EU membership undertaken by a substantial number of those countries have led to a rapid reorientation of their trade towards Western Europe. The EU has developed its bilateral relations through association agreements with its Central and Eastern European partners, partnership and cooperation agreements with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and, finally, through stabilization and association agreements with its partners in South-Eastern Europe. Those agreements were developed in parallel to the EU enlargement process, whereby 10 countries will become members in 2004. At the same time, there have been a large number of preferential agreements formed among the countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS. In Central and Eastern Europe, the most important initiative is the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). In the CIS region, nearly all countries have signed bilateral free trade agreements with each other. However, not all of those agreements are implemented or enforced.

142. Recently, the EU launched a "wider Europe" initiative, in which ECE is playing a supporting role. The purpose of this initiative is to mitigate the negative implications of EU enlargement for non-acceding countries, including neighbouring CIS countries and southern Mediterranean countries. Meanwhile, negotiations are continuing between the EU and Russia regarding the Common European Economic Space.

143. There are currently more than 15 RTAs in operation in the ESCAP region, most of which are clearly grounded in regional political alliances or common cultural affinities. The most highly integrated arrangements are those based on negative list (as opposed to positive list) approaches to liberalization, where all products and services are automatically covered, unless they have been listed specifically as subject to exemptions. Examples of such advanced RTAs are the Australia and New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement (ANZERTA) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area (AFTA). A number of other RTAs in the ESCAP region are based on a product-by-product, positive list approach to liberalization. This is a much less advanced form of integration, of which the South Asia Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) in the Pacific and the Bangkok Agreement are examples. The latter has gained a new momentum with the accession of China. China has also signalled its interest in joining in a free-trade arrangement with ASEAN. More recently, the ESCAP region has seen a surge in bilateral trade agreements, many of which are based on broad economic partnership concepts that go beyond tariff liberalization.

144. Latin American intraregional exports expanded at rates higher than the world average in the 1990s, although the performance in the region has been heterogeneous. Mexico, Central America and some Caribbean countries benefited from United States demand for imports and their exports increased at very high

rates. Plurilateral negotiations aimed at the formation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas are also being pursued. Growth in trade was especially strong within the main interregional agreements, particularly the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) and the renewed Andean Community between 1990 and 1995, when the yearly increase rates were 22 and 19 per cent, respectively. In all cases, exports of goods and services in Latin America have been severely affected by the international crisis of the last two years. According to ECLAC, the expansion of exports has not been converted into economic growth and the region still displays high levels of "structural heterogeneity", a concept advanced to characterize the existence of huge productivity differentials across sectors. After more than one decade of deep integration of Latin American and Caribbean countries into the world economy, there has not been a transfer of productivity from successful exporting firms to the rest of the economy. Along the same lines, ECLAC has questioned the role of trade and foreign investment in promoting the linkages between exporting firms and sectors and the rest of the economy. Natural resource-based exports tend to be better promoters of forward and backward linkages with the rest of the goods- and services-producing sectors in the economy than import-intensive exports such as in the case of the export-processing (maquila) specialization of Mexico and Central America.

145. Africa is the weakest partner in global interdependence. The weak capacity prevailing in many African countries is also reflected in lack of: capacity to utilize the linkage between trade and development; technical capacity to analyse trade issues and their implications for the African economies; capacity to adjust to the legal complexities of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements and arrangements; and capacity to deal effectively with supply constraints that inhibit African countries from being effective partners in global economy. Absence of efficient infrastructure is a major cause of Africa's low competitiveness and very low levels of intraregional trade and investment. According to the World Bank, freight costs for landlocked African countries are more than twice as high as in Asia. In 1990, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) classified 75 per cent of countries in sub-Saharan Africa as having "restrictive" trade policies. However, only 14 per cent of them are now considered as having restrictive trade policies. The situation is still far from ideal as average tariffs of 19 per cent in Africa are higher than the 12 per cent average in the rest of the world. African tariffs on raw materials such as fibres remain high. Taxing key inputs for labour-intensive industries like clothing and textiles, which Africa has a comparative advantage to produce and export, is counter-productive. Likewise, high tariffs on fertilizers, pesticides and agricultural chemicals constitute an important disincentive to local production for export. Tariffs on essential inputs in farm production, such as fertilizers (produced by a number of African countries), average four times those imposed in South-East Asia.

146. The establishment of the African Union (AU) in 2002, in place of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), heralds a significant reorganization of the African integration movement. The AU emphasizes economic integration as the route to political unity. In line with this approach, ECA organized the Third African Development Forum in September 2001 on the theme "Defining priorities for regional integration", with the aim of contributing to the process of establishing and galvanizing the AU. ECA is also bringing out later this year its first Report on Integration of Africa. It reports that the second half of the 1990s saw some progress towards closer economic integration within Africa's various regional groupings. In

addition to analysing a broad spectrum of integration issues and examining specific indicators for each regional economic community, the report has developed its own African Integration Index, which combines data from eight different sectors of activity: trade; money and finance; transport; communications; industry; energy; food and agriculture; and human development and labour markets. In the 12 RECs reviewed, progress is uneven. Three regional economic communities are clear frontrunners: the Union Economique et Monetaire Ouest Africaine, the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community. The Communauté Economique des Pays des Grands Lacs, comprising Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, fared the worst, in large part because of the incessant wars that have afflicted the region. Similarly, wars within the Mano River Union, made up of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, also brought poor performance initially, although integration advanced somewhat in latter years as fighting subsided in Liberia.

147. The ESCWA region also suffers serious handicaps in making the best use of trade, both intraregional and global. Overall Arab trade amounted to 2.6 per cent of world trade in 2001, which is low compared to other regions, while the share of FDI flows to the Arab countries registered only 0.8 per cent of the world FDI. Other indicators of integration with the world economy relating to trade in services are also low. In terms of tourism, the share of the Arab region in 2001 was 4.8 per cent of number of tourists worldwide; and 3.6 per cent of the world tourism revenues.

148. Eleven Arab countries, including seven ESCWA members, are currently members of WTO. Another five countries, namely, Algeria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Yemen, three of which are in the ESCWA region, are in the process of accession. Their membership in WTO will have a significant bearing on the region. A large number of Arab countries have been engaged in trade agreements with Western countries, under or through Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agreements and other bilateral agreements, such as the Jordan-United States Free Trade Agreement. Arab countries have entered into agreements aimed at increasing trade among themselves. The most recognized of these is the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, established in 1998, with a membership of 14 Arab countries, and expected to come into force in 2005. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries also established a free trade area in the 1980s and are working towards establishing a customs union. Trade restrictions remain high in many countries of the region. The successful implementation of GAFTA will support the trend of negotiations in WTO by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers or eliminating them; the partnership agreements with the EU are also in line with those trends. Some recent initiatives by the Arab countries in response to the challenges of globalization and regional integration are reflected in three other main sectors, in addition to trade. These are transport, energy and the environment. In terms of transport, the Integrated Transport System for the Arab Mashreq, developed by ESCWA and ratified by 11 Arab countries so far, will prepare the way for a network of international roads with global specifications. In the energy sector, projects on electricity and gas networks are in progress. In the area of the environment, the establishment of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region will facilitate integration and interaction in the field of sustainable development.

The role of the regional commissions

149. The regional commissions, by virtue of being regional organizations themselves, in addition to being the regional arm of the United Nations in the economic and social fields, maintain close cooperation with the regional integration and cooperation groupings in their respective regions. Their substantive interactions are also facilitated by varying degrees of subregional presence by three of them, namely, ECA, ESCAP and ECLAC. More particularly, their decades-long experience in analysing the trends in regional trade and their capacity to analyse regional implications of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations and the GATT/WTO agreements places them in a unique position to support their developing member and associate member countries in their dealings with global and regional trading arrangements. This support is necessary inasmuch as simultaneous negotiations of trade agreements at the bilateral and multilateral levels pose a number of challenges: (a) ensuring that commitments taken at different levels are mutually supportive, coherent and non-contradictory; (b) enabling more dynamic interaction between the private and the public sectors in order to ensure that those agreements become effective trade promotion instruments; and (c) assisting in capacity-building to ensure that negotiators can defend and promote their country's interests in the various trading arrangements.

150. In addition to the regional commissions' established role, in cooperation with WTO and UNCTAD, in providing technical assistance for capacity-building and for strengthening the participation of developing countries in the WTO regime, the regional commissions' unique advantage of geographical proximity also enables them to analyse the interaction of multilateral integration with ongoing regional trade processes and to share the experiences of countries and identify best practices in that regard. Further, in view of growing realization of the dynamic effect of trade facilitation on competitiveness and market integration, the regional commissions are taking a more proactive role in promoting trade facilitation measures in their respective regions. In that regard, they also cooperate closely among themselves, as well as with other United Nations organizations, as indicated in subsection B.2 below.

B. Cooperation among the regional commissions in given areas

1. Transport and transport facilitation

151. Cooperation among the regional commissions has witnessed continuous progress with regard to concerted efforts at harmonizing border crossing formalities and technical standards for transport infrastructure and trade procedures. An example of such cooperation is a joint project entitled "Capacity building in developing interregional land and land-sea transport linkages", which the regional commissions have started implementing over the period 2002-2006, with ESCWA acting as the lead agency currently. Progress made in the project so far includes ratification of transport agreements; identification of national focal points for countries participating in the project; and the taking of steps towards the preparation of country profiles and country reports. Within the framework of the project, ECA and ESCWA are taking the necessary action to identify and formulate interregional transport linkages within their geographical regions. A similar exercise will be

undertaken by ESCAP to indicate appropriate interregional linkages with the ESCWA region through the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

152. ESCAP and ECE have prepared an implementation plan with regard to the Asia-Europe transport linkages, which includes defining the implementation responsibilities of each of the commissions with respect to the 17 participating member countries, and draft terms of reference for the national focal points. The countries of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) expressed their appreciation for this component of the project during the eighth session of the Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in March 2003. The project constitutes an important activity within the SPECA programme of work in developing the transport corridors for the landlocked countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus to improve their market access to Europe. (See more below under SPECA.)

153. ESCWA member States adopted the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq in April 2003, under a project entitled "Integrated transport system of the Arab Mashreq". The Agreement calls for the implementation of unified technical standards for a railway network, similar to those of ECE, and will help improve interregional and intraregional transport linkages. ECA and the African Development Bank carried out a study on the status of the missing links along the trans-African highways and all stakeholders reviewed the study at a meeting in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 January 2003. These activities are part of the ECA programme to promote a regional network comprising trans-African highways, ports and railways. ECLAC has engaged consultants to prepare a report on identification of major maritime routes as a component of the commission's effort to enhance international shipping services as part of the land-sea linkages in the region. The study focuses on each significant combination of feeder service and trans-oceanic service across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans currently utilized for trading between Latin America and Asia, Africa and Europe. The comprehensive study covering this activity will be completed during the second half of 2003.

154. A further example of an interregional initiative on transit transport was an ESCAP seminar held in Kunming, China, in September 2002, on the promotion and implementation of the Customs Convention on Containers and the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets. The seminar, which was organized in cooperation with ECE, considered the appropriate legal framework for transit transport in the Greater Mekong subregion. In addition, ESCAP is currently discussing with the Transport Division of ECE the possibility of organizing a workshop in India on the European Agreement concerning the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR).

2. Trade facilitation

155. The International Forum on Trade Facilitation "Sharing the gains of globalization in the new security environment", took place in Geneva on 14 and 15 May 2003 and was organized by ECE in collaboration with ESCAP, ECLAC, ECA and ESCWA. The Forum concluded that the regional commissions should play a strong role in supporting and developing technical cooperation initiatives for the implementation of trade facilitation, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations. As a result, a joint project, entitled "Interregional partnership for promoting trade as an engine of growth through knowledge management and taking

advantage of information and communication technology" has been submitted for funding to the Development Account, with ECLAC acting as the lead agency for the project. The objective of this joint interregional project is to strengthen both the international competitiveness and the negotiating capacities of developing countries by sharing knowledge on problems and best practices in the various countries and regions relating to (i) trade promotion and diversification; (ii) a greater participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in global supply networks; (iii) designing and implementing trade facilitation policies at national and regional levels; and (iv) a greater use of knowledge management and information and communication technologies in supply chain management. It is anticipated that the project will be carried out over a 24-month period beginning in 2004.

156. On trade facilitation and e-business, ECE is cooperating with ESCAP and ESCWA on the operation and maintenance of the UNeTradeS.Net web site (http://www.unece.org/etrades/welcome.htm), which provides a single one-stop-shop for traders to receive information on trade and e-business in a user-friendly format.

157. On trade and sustainable development, the Doha WTO Ministerial Conference and the World Summit for Sustainable Development underscored the need for developing countries to build their capacities for addressing the multifaceted and complex trade and environment issues. To accomplish this, ESCAP will lead a joint project with other regional commissions, UNCTAD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to strengthen the capacity of developing member States to formulate and negotiate effective trade and environment policies, taking into account their linkages, implications for market access, their relationship to multilateral environmental agreements and their relevance to national priorities.

158. In the area of food standards, ECE and ESCAP jointly organized a seminar on "Coping with food supply chain globalization" in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in June 2003. The seminar is part of ongoing training courses held by the commissions to enhance the ability of Asian countries to trade their agricultural produce internationally.

3. ECE/ECA/ESCWA cooperation in the Mediterranean

159. The joint ECE, ESCWA and ECA project "Capacity-building in trade facilitation and electronic business in the Mediterranean region" aims to increase the competitiveness of companies in the Mediterranean region in regional and global markets. The project seeks to do this through simplifying and harmonizing trade procedures throughout the transaction chain; implementing automated processes and information technology for administration and commerce; and facilitating the participation of SMEs in electronic business. It focuses on trade among the non-European Union Mediterranean countries, members of ECE, ESCWA and ECA.

160. The first task of the project was to identify potential project member organizations in participating countries and progress in that undertaking has been achieved. A total of 12 countries and regional chambers of commerce in the three regions are involved in the project, which is funded under the Development Account for the current biennium and which is seen as a model for future cooperation in trade facilitation between the regional commissions.

4. Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

161. Cooperation between ECE and ESCAP has continued in the execution of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). The Regional Advisory Committee, which overlooks and provides guidance for programme implementation, held its fourth session in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 28 and 29 November 2002, during which Azerbaijan was admitted as a member of SPECA. At that session, the Committee looked into the early operationalization of the Business Cooperation Council of SPECA, with a view to promoting international trade and investment flows directed towards Central Asian countries. The Regional Advisory Committee has focused on three project working groups, namely, on transport and border crossing (led by Kazakhstan); on efficient use of energy and water resources (led by Kyrgyzstan); and on an international economic conference (led by Tajikistan).

162. In the project working group for transport, cooperation was focused on border crossing and transit facilitation. In particular, the list of regional investment projects to be submitted to international financial institutions was prepared and reviewed. Work has continued on the preparation of a memorandum of understanding on the international road transport of goods in the framework of SPECA for its further signing at the ministerial level; the elaboration of a SPECA joint position for the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation (Almaty, August 2003); and the draft action programme for transit transport cooperation in the subregion.

163. In the project working group for energy, cooperation centred around the joint ECE/ESCAP Development Account project which provides for capacity-building in the area of rational and efficient use of energy and water resources in Central Asia. The fourth version of the Concept of Regional Strategy on Rational and Efficient Use of Energy and Water Resources in Central Asia was prepared and adopted. In close cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, ESCAP and ECE will provide assistance to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to establish a bilateral commission to operate the water facilities of inter-State use and prepare methods of allocating the exploitation and maintenance costs. In addition, several training courses/workshops were offered in the subregion on project development, financial engineering and business planning, and on water resources management.

164. The project working group for Tajikistan organized the International Economic Conference on Tajikistan in Dushanbe, from 2 to 4 April 2003. The conference was a significant milestone in mobilizing the support of the international community for the development of the subregion. The conference focused on (a) a medium-term strategy of structural transformation, economic recovery and reforms in Tajikistan; (b) a strategy of subregional economic cooperation in Central Asia; and (c) a global cooperation framework with particular attention to issues relating to participation in the multilateral trading system. In addition, ESCAP, in cooperation with UNCTAD, organized a Regional Round Table on Foreign Direct Investment for Central Asia on 3 and 4 April 2003 in Dushanbe. The round table discussed the promotion and facilitation of foreign direct investment at the national and subregional levels of interest to potential investors from Asia and Europe and other trade and economic partners.

165. Participating countries, and the international community have come to appreciate the SPECA activities and the accession of Azerbaijan to SPECA is a manifestation of the growing recognition of this unique programme. A number of international organizations and national technical assistance agencies from the donor countries have cooperated with SPECA in the implementation of its projects and programmes. ECE is organizing a conference on SPECA on 23 and 24 June 2003 in Geneva, to provide the member countries with the opportunity to present the results of transition reforms, challenges and needs, and to establish new contacts and partnerships.

5. ECE/ESCAP cooperation in the field of energy

166. ECE and ESCAP regularly exchange information on ongoing and planned operational activities, in particular with regard to planned projects involving countries that are members of both commissions (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey and the Russian Federation).

167. During the current biennium, the two commissions have coordinated their energy activities and extrabudgetary resources. ESCAP is organizing an international training course for energy managers from countries of Western and Central Asia in Ankara, Turkey, in June 2002, for which ECE provided experts. Expertise from ECE was also provided to the Meeting of Senior Officials on Energy Cooperation in North-East Asia and the Expert Round Table on Technical Cooperation and Financing of Energy Efficiency Projects, held in Vladivostok, Russian Federation, in April 2003.

6. Statistics

168. There has always been good cooperation among the regional commissions in the field of statistics and interregional cooperation across the United Nations regions has gained increasing attention in connection with the Millennium Development Goals.

169. The increased cooperation is already evident in the context of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and its Bureau, where representatives of the other regional commissions participate regularly in the work of CES. In 2002, representatives of ECLAC and ESCAP participated in the CES annual plenary session and, starting in 2003, a summary report of the planned future work of other regional committees of statistics is being prepared as background information for the plenary sessions of the Conference. Furthermore, the ECE secretariat has proposed to the CES Bureau the possible extension of the integrated presentation to cover the statistical activities of the other organizations that are members of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, including the other four regional commissions. The CES Bureau will discuss this proposal in detail in October 2003. There is also frequent participation of delegates from the other regional commissions in expert group meetings organized by the ECE Statistical Division in various subject areas, such as national accounts, international comparison of gross domestic product, migration statistics and gender statistics.

170. The regional commissions also cooperate in the delivery of technical cooperation. In 2001, ECE organized, in cooperation with ESCAP, an interregional seminar on the fundamental principles of official statistics, in Ulaanbaatar,

Mongolia. A second seminar of this kind was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in April 2003. ECE and ESCAP also enjoy an ongoing exchange of information on regional advisory services in Central Asian and South Caucasus countries.

7. Gender equality

171. The first phase of the project on gender indicators was undertaken within the framework of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. The project was funded from the Development Account and ECLAC was appointed as task manager. During the 2003 meeting of the Interagency Network, ECLAC reported that the task force set up in this regard had successfully completed its work, and that all the regional commissions had set up databases compiling available indicators of women's empowerment and gender equality from multilateral and bilateral sources. The second phase of the project is to link these indicators to the Millennium Development Goals, and the World Bank and UNDP have been designated as co-task managers. ECLAC has already clustered gender indicators according to the Millennium Goals on the basis of interagency collaboration in 17 countries and the regional database is available on the ECLAC web site. The database allows for the Interagency Network members to provide data required for system activities within the context of the Millennium Declaration.

172. Each of the other regional commissions has launched projects and activities to respond to the need to make gender indicators available for policy-making in their respective regions and many of these projects have been posted on their web sites. For example, ECE has posted on its web site regional gender statistics which allow the monitoring of the situation of women and men. ESCAP has developed a framework of gender indicators which it has posted on its web site. ECA developed a "Status of African women" index that will provide benchmarks for gender in the Millennium Goals and the NEPAD targets. On the ESCWA web site, country profiles on the situation of Arab women are available, as well as annotated bibliographic entries on the Arab family.

173. On gender equality and ITC, initial agreement was reached with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to hold regional meetings in 2003 on gender and information and communication technologies in preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society. In January 2003, ESCAP joined with other organizations in supporting the Asia Pacific Gender Forum at the regional preparatory meeting held in Japan for the World Summit on the Information Society. In addition, a round table held in Bucharest, on 7 November 2002, on the theme "Building a gender sensitive information society", examined the "gender divide" within the digital divide as a serious concern in all countries in the ECE region, especially countries in Eastern Europe and the CIS where women's position in the economy has deteriorated during the past decade. The organizers of the round table were ECE, the Government of Romania, UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and ITU. They recommended mainstreaming gender into ICT policy debate in order to create an enabling environment for women. Similar meetings are planned for other regional commissions.

8. World Summit on the Information Society

174. The regional commissions are keen to promote interregional cooperation in ICT. Accordingly, on the sidelines of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on the Information Society, a regional coordination meeting was held on 24 February 2003. In addition to the five regional commissions, the ICT Task Force, FAO, UNCTAD, UNDP and the secretariat of the World Summit participated. Representatives of the regional commissions called for better coordination of regional efforts and regular exchange of "best practices", especially between commissions with overlapping areas of responsibility or covering regions that faced common challenges. Information sharing was identified as a fundamental condition for ensuring better coordination. To that end, it was agreed to design a format to facilitate circulation of information among the regional commissions, and to use information and communication technologies to support this process. It was also decided to circulate concrete proposals for future consultations.

IV. Report of the Executive Secretaries

175. The Executive Secretaries met on four occasions, on 18 July 2002, 1 September 2002, 26 and 27 September 2002 and 12 February 2003, in conjunction with the 2002 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, the Johannesburg Summit, the meeting of the Senior Management Group and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. At these meetings, the Executive Secretaries exchanged views on the preparations undertaken by the commissions for the World Summit for Sustainable Development and the World Summit on the Information Society; the second set of reforms of the Secretary-General, Strengthening the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Change; global development issues as they relate to their respective regions; areas requiring cooperation among the commissions and the relationship of the commissions with their partners in the United Nations system. The Executive Secretaries also exchanged views on the main strategic tasks before their respective commissions so as to assist Member States to implement the commitments in the Millennium Declaration and those arising from other United Nations conferences and on how they should reflect this in further priority setting as part of the process of their preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

176. **The Executive Secretaries agreed that the commissions provide an important regional forum for the exchange of policies and best practices among member States and other stakeholders. With respect to world conferences, the commissions brought global concerns to their regions and regional concerns to global forums. While achieving development goals and targets was clearly the primary responsibility of national Governments, the commissions could assist their member countries in peer reviews and the exchange of information, including on lessons learned. The regional level was key for effective implementation as it provided a bridge between national priorities and global concerns. Monitoring and review at the regional level should also provide information on regional initiatives and processes, as well as partnerships. Such reviews would provide an analysis and assessment of national experiences and identify progress and constraints experienced at the national, subregional and regional levels, so that the issues at hand could be more effectively addressed at**

the global level. The Executive Secretaries agreed to continue their efforts to highlight the role of the regional commissions in forging common regional positions, as well as special concerns that were unique to the regions.

177. **The Executive Secretaries agreed that although the dual role of the regional commissions, as regional outposts of the United Nations and as its regional expression, had been reaffirmed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/46, the Secretary-General's proposals for further reform, including for the preparations for results-based budgets, should bring greater convergence of the commissions' activities with the priorities of the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of major world conferences. For this purpose, through the process of preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, the commissions had further strengthened their priority setting and strategic planning. They had also streamlined their organizational structures and the functioning of their subsidiary governmental forums. All five commissions had also reinforced their outreach activities, including through improved dissemination of information about their activities through institutional web sites, a consolidated publication strategy and improved press coverage.**

178. The Executive Secretaries also considered the Secretary-General's reform proposals relating to technical cooperation and his intention to clarify who does what, so as to achieve greater coherence and complementarity in the provision of these services, in his report on the subject to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. They underscored the importance of the role of the commissions in providing technical assistance in key areas such as trade, macroeconomic analysis and finance; sustainable development, including water and energy; transport; social development and social integration; the advancement of women; governance; institution-building; science and technology for development; and statistics and data collection. Their technical cooperation role supports their role in normative and analytical work by ensuring that it remains closely linked to the development realities on the ground. It also facilitates the implementation by their respective member States of regionally and globally agreed development goals and norms and standards. The Executive Secretaries were of the view that the commissions should, in particular, play the overall leadership role in facilitating cooperation and the coordination of technical cooperation activities provided by United Nations entities to regional and subregional processes. The regional coordination meetings mandated by the Economic and Social Council should be utilized for this purpose.

179. **The Executive Secretaries reviewed the regional coordination meetings and found them to be useful for information exchange; however, they agreed on the need to make them more strategic in their approach to coordination. Given that those meetings had varied in approach and outcome, depending on the issues discussed, they should be made more effective for the coordination of follow-up to world conferences and other global intergovernmental commitments and, in particular, for regional monitoring of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In this connection, the Executive Secretaries stressed that the goal of these meetings should be to encourage collaboration among the United Nations entities and effective linkages of their activities so as to ensure a more coherent response by the United Nations system to agreed priorities for their respective regions. The Executive Secretaries also noted that the mandate provided to ECA for coordination and**

monitoring of the activities of the United Nations system in support of NEPAD, as well as the endorsement by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board of the role of ECA, had ensured a stronger direction for the regional coordination meetings, while maintaining their simple structure and lack of bureaucratic layers.

180. The Executive Secretaries also exchanged views on the Secretary-General's proposals for strengthening the role of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs for strategic planning and policy coherence. They noted that the Committee's work has led to improved interaction between the regional commissions and other relevant United Nations entities working at the global level. They expressed satisfaction with the substantive exchange undertaken in connection with the preparations for the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, in particular the identification of ways for establishing closer links between global issues and their regional characteristics and implications. The Committee, for example, had agreed on the need to bring out those links in the area of trade and trading arrangements. The Committee had also agreed that the implementation of global commitments required a regional approach and the role of the regional commissions in strengthening coordination at the regional level needed to be further pursued. The Executive Secretaries were also satisfied with the ongoing cooperation between the commissions and members of the Committee, particularly DESA and UNCTAD. Cooperation between UNDP and the commissions had shown improvement in some areas; however, the Executive Secretaries agreed on the need to involve UNDP more actively in the work of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and in the regional coordination meetings, so as to ensure improved coordination of regional programmes and activities, as well as in the preparation of Human Development Reports.

181. Among the development issues discussed, the Executive Secretaries noted the critical importance of the timely and successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda. They reviewed the active role played by the regional commissions, in cooperation with UNCTAD and WTO, in extending technical assistance to developing countries to help them prepare for the complexities of the multilateral trade negotiations. In this connection, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Secretaries that the topic for the regional cooperation item at its substantive session of 2003 should be: "Development dimensions of trade negotiations: a regional perspective". The Executive Secretaries also exchanged views on the status of cooperation between the commissions and subregional organizations and integration groupings in their respective regions. They noted the many instances in which regional trading arrangements were gaining momentum. The two projects jointly submitted by the commissions for funding by the Development Account under the fourth tranche, on (a) capacity-building in trade and environment and (b) interregional partnership for promoting trade as an engine of growth through knowledge management and information and communication technology, should, in the view of the Executive Secretaries, further strengthen interregional cooperation, as well as cooperation among the commissions.

Notes

[1] The Council's attention is also drawn to the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (E/2003/67).

[2] An international collaborative research group for econometric modelling, coordinated jointly by the Development Policy Analyses Division of the United Nations Secretariat and the University of Toronto.

[3] Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference, Doha, 9-14 November 2001, para. 2.

[4] Ibid., para. 3.

[5] See ECLAC, *Latin America and the Caribbean in the World Economy, 2001-2002* (LC/G.2189-P/1). According to the Government of Brazil, the full presentation of one case to the Dispute Settlement Body costs between 500,000 and one million dollars, without computing public officials' salaries.

[6] ***WTO status of non-members as of April 2003*: ECE: Observer status** — Andorra, Azerbaijan,* Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan,* Russian Federation,* Serbia and Montenegro, Tajikistan,* Ukraine, Uzbekistan;* **No status** — Monaco, San Marino, Turkmenistan;* **ESCAP: Observer status** — Azerbaijan,* Bhutan, Cambodia, Kazakhstan,* Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Russian Federation,* Samoa, Tajikistan,* Tonga, Uzbekistan,* Vanuatu, Viet Nam; **No status** — Afghanistan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Federated States of Micronesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan,* Tuvalu; **ECLAC: Observer status** — Bahamas; **ECA: Observer status** — Algeria, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sudan; **No status** — Comoros, Eritrea, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Somalia; **ESCWA: Observer status** — Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen; **No status** — Iraq, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic.

* Enjoys dual membership of ECE and ESCAP.

[7] For a detailed exposé, see *WTO Accessions and Development Policies*, UNCTAD, New York and Geneva, 2001.

[8] Ibid., p. 37 (the accession of Vanuatu to WTO: lessons for the multilateral trading system).

[9] Ibid., p. 53 (some issues involved in WTO accession).

[10] Though there could be exceptions in some subregions. For instance, in the case of sub-Saharan Africa the share of intraregional trade in global trade is declining.